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· THE GEORGICS ·



· OF VIRGIL ·

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THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL.





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THE
GEORGICS OF VIRGIL.

TRANSLATED BY

R. D. BLACKMORE, M. A.

COLL. EXON. OXON.

AUTHOR OF "LORNA DOONE," ETC.



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1871

MAIN

TO

THE REV. CHARLES WILLIAMS, D.D.,

PRINCIPAL OF JESUS COLLEGE, OXFORD,

THIS LITTLE WORK IS, UNDER KIND PERMISSION,

DEDICATED

BY A GRATEFUL ADMIRER

OF

HIS SCHOLARSHIP AND LEARNING.



APOLOGY.

1860.



INDULGENCE have ye for a gardener's dream,
(A man with native melody unblest,)
How patient toil and love that does its best,
Clouds though they be, may follow the sun-
beam?

And in this waning of poetic day,
With all so misty, moonlit, and grotesque,
'Tis sweet to quit that medley picturesque,
And chase the sunset of a clearer ray.

Too well I know, by fruitless error taught,
How latent beauty hath fallacious clues,
How difficult to catch, how quick to lose
The mirage of imaginative thought.

And harder still to make that vision bear
The loose refraction of a modern tongue,
To render sight to hearing, old to young,
And fix my purview on an English ear.

Too well I know, by gardener's hope misled,
How cheap are things that long have cost me dear ;
And though I fail to graft the Poet here,
No wilding branches may I flaunt instead.

But yonder lo, my amethysts and gold,
So please you—grapes and apricots—constrain
These more accustom'd hands ; unless ye deign
To tend with me the “ kine and bees of old.”





THE GEORGICS.

BOOK THE FIRST.



HAT makes blithe corn, beneath what starry sign
To turn the sod, and wed the elm and vine,
What care of beeves, and how the flock may
thrive,

And due experience of the frugal hive—

Mæcenus, hence my song. Ye lights on high,

5

Who lead the rolling seasons through the sky,

Good Liber, come, and fostering Ceres too,

If earth exchanged, by power derived from you,

Chaonian mast for dainty wheat ; and quaff'd

With new-found grapes her Achelöan draught.

10

Ho too, ye Fauns, that love the farming folk,
 Come, tripping Fauns, and maidens of the oak,
 Your boons I sing. And thou, whose trident rang
 Upon young earth, and forth the war-horse sprang :
 And thou, woodranger, whose three hundred steers, 15
 All snowy white, the Cæan coppice rears :
 Nay, Pan thyself, stout warder of the sheep,
 Forsake ancestral grove and Arcad steep,
 If still thou lovest Mænala thine own,
 Come, Tegeän god, and make thy presence known ! 20
 Ho, Pallas, author of the olive bough,
 And boy inventor of the talon'd plough !
 With cypress fresh unfibred from the sods,
 Sylvanus, come ! come, goddesses and gods ! 24
 All ye, whose province is the furrow'd plain,
 Who nurse unsown the infancy of grain,
 And pour upon the seedlands gracious rain.

And foremost thou, of whom 'tis yet unknown
 What senate of the gods shall hold thy throne ;

Or if, great Cæsar, thou shalt haply deign 30
To view the towns, and make the world thy reign ;
Thy mother's myrtle if the globe shall bring,
To crown thee sire of corn and tempest-king :
Or com'st thou god of the unmeasur'd sea,
And sailors own no providence but thee ; 35
Shall Thulé be thy serf, and Tethys crave
Thy hand for some sweet heiress of the wave ?
Or wilt thou lend the laggard months thy star,
Where flies the Virgin from the Claws afar ?
The Scorpion folds his fiery arms awry, 40
And leaves thee larger moiety of sky.
Whate'er thy choice (since Orcus hopes in vain,
Nor hast thyself so dark a lust of reign ;
Though Greece admire the meads of asphodel,
And Proserpine be satisfied with hell), 45
Whate'er thy choice, vouchsafe my voyage good speed,
And bid my gallant enterprise succeed ;
For waylost rustics deign with me to feel,
Advance, and learn to honour our appeal.

When Spring is new, and mountains grey with thaw, 50
And loam grows mealy to the zephyr's flaw,
The plough at once my groaning bull must bear,
And, chafed along the furrow, gleam the share.
That corn-land best shall pay the farmer's cost,
Which twice hath felt the sun, and twice the frost, 55
His wildest vows with double answer meet,
And burst his garners with a world of wheat.

But ere we plough a stranger farm, 'tis good
To learn the winds, and heaven's uncertain mood,
The ancient tilth, and how the country lies, 60
And what each quarter yields, and what denies.
Here corn exults, and there the grape is glad,
Here trees and grass, unbidden verdure add.
So mark how Tmolus yields his saffron store,
While ivory is the gift of Indian shore ; 65
With incense soft the softer Shebans deal,
The stark Chalybian's element is steel ;
With acrid castor reek the Pontic wares,
Epirus wins the palm of Elia mares.

So Nature framed these laws, for good or ill, 70
And stamp'd on each the fiat of her will,
When first Deucalion, through a world forlorn,
Cast stones, and man, a flinty race, was born.

Then come, forthwith, before the year grow old,
Let sturdy bulls turn up the buxom mould, 75
And dusty summer dress the clods supine,
When mellow sunbeams more maturely shine.
But if the land is poor ; 'twill be enow
Beneath Arcture to skim with shallow plough,
Here, lest the weeds annoy the blithesome grain, 80
And there, lest water fail the sandy plain.

Shorn fallows each alternate year should rest,
And leisure brace the languid meadow's breast ;
Or change your star, and sow the yellow corn
Where bouncing peas with rattling pods were borne, 85
Or where, from slim vetch and from lupin rude,
You glean'd the brittle haulm and rustling wood.
For hemp and oats consume their nurture deep,
And poppies drizzled with Lethæan sleep.

But yet alternate years relieve the toil ;

Let no false shame however check thy hand

To glut with rich manure a drouthy soil,

And cast foul ashes o'er exhausted land.

So fields by change of crops have welcome rest,

Nor thankless proves the earth's unfurrow'd breast. 95

Nay, oft 'tis good to burn the sterile leys,

And fire the stubble with a crackling blaze :

Or if thereby the soil's constituents breed

Mysterious vigour and nutritious feed ;

Or if, by purging of the fire, they lose 100

Injurious properties and worthless ooze ;

Or if the heat opes passages and pores

Unseen, whose moisture meets the tender spores ;

Or if it hardens and contracts the veins,

That gape too widely ; lest the prying rains, 105

Or beating sunglare fiercely shed around,

Or winter's searching frost consume the ground.

So then, by crushing idle clods, the swain

With harrow and bush-harrow glads the plain,

Nor doth the golden Ceres from on high,
Without a blessing watch his industry. 110

Nor vain his work who cuts the straight rig's chine,
With plough set crossways to his former line,
Slashes the hummocks left by Autumn's toil,
Exerts the land, and disciplines the soil. 115

For winters dry, and showery summers, pray ;
The dust of winter makes the cornland gay :
'Tis this so proudly decks the Mysian wold,
And Gargara marvels at his crown of gold.

And what of him who, having sown the grain,
Falls to pell-mell, and routs the flying plain,
Crushes the clods of over-fat argill,
And floods the seedland with the ductile rill ?
When parch'd fields gasp with dying herbage—lo,
He tempts the runnel from the hill-side trough ; 120
The purling runnel brawls and falls away
Through the smooth stones, and slakes the thirsty clay.

Or him who, lest the stalk be overweigh'd,
Feeds off the rankness of the tender blade,

When first they top the furrow's edge ; and drains 130
The stagnant plashes from the spongy plains ?
So much the more if, by the season's whim,
A flooded river overswell its brim,
A slimy mantle o'er the field diffuse,
And fill the ditches with fermenting ooze. 135

And yet, when carls and beeves have done their best,
The reprobate goose will prove no trifling pest ;
Strymonian cranes, and bitter endive's root
Annoy, and shade is noxious to the fruit.

Our heavenly Father hath not judged it right 140
To leave the road of agriculture light :
'Twas he who first made husbandry a plan,
And care a whetstone for the wit of man ;
Nor suffer'd he his own domains to lie
Asleep in cumbrous old-world lethargy. 145

Ere Jove, the acres own'd no master swain,
None durst enclose or even mark the plain ;
The world was common, and the willing land
More frankly gave, with no one to demand.

'Twas Jove lent deadly venom to the snake, 150
Bade wolves to prowl, and bade the surges break,
Stripp'd honey from the leaves, abolish'd fire,
And made the wine that gush'd in floods retire :
That practice might the various arts create,
On study's anvil, by laborious dint, 155
The plant of corn by furrows propagate,
And strike the fire that lurks in veins of flint.
Then first the rivers felt the scoop'd canoe,
Then mariners gave name, and number too,
To every star that hath them in his care, 160
Pleiads, Hyads, and Lycaon's bear.
Then snare for beasts, and lime for birds, were tried,
And hounds to draw along the covert side.
Some launch the cast-net on the river free,
Some drag the dripping trawl along the sea. 165
Then temper'd steel and grating saws ensued,
(With wedges first they clove the splintering wood,)
Then came the various arts : oh, grand success
Of reckless toil and resolute distress !

But Ceres first ordain'd, for human weal, 170
To turn the sod with new-invented steel ;
When acorns and tree-strawberries fail'd the wood,
And now Dodona grudged her ancient food.
Nor long ere trouble fell upon the grain,
That knavish rust should gnaw the stalk in twain, 175
And thistles, lazy rufflers, choke the seeds ;
The crops die off, a ragged wood succeeds,
Caltrops and burs, and o'er the harvest gay,
The gloomy darnel and the wild oats sway.
And so, unless with constant harrows plied 180
You chop the soil, and scare the birds beside,
And check with pruning-hook the bowering shade,
And call with many a vow the shower to aid,
Great ricks you shall behold of other folk,
But make your dinner from the shaken oak. 185

Now sing the weapons of the hardy swain,
Without which none can sow or tend the grain ;
The ploughshare first and curved plough's massy frame,
Slow-rolling waggons of Eleusine dame,

And sled, and sleigh, and harrow's crushing weight, 190
And Celeus' ware, the cheap twig-woven crate ;
Bush-harrows too, and Bacchus' mystic van ;
All which, with foresight and judicious plan,
Must long have been procured, ere may be thine
'The well-earn'd glory of a farm divine. 195

First, in the woods, with downright force we bow
An elm, to take the form and curve of plough :
Hereto, at base, an eight-foot pole is join'd,
'Two earth-boards, and a share-beam double-spined :
A linden also, lightsome for the yoke, 200
Is fell'd betimes, and beech that towers afar,
(The helve behind to guide the plunging car)—
Then hang these woods to season in the smoke.

Now many a timeworn maxim can I quote,
Unless thou scornest things of little note : 205
With rollers level first the threshing-floor,
Hand-pick, and ram with solid concrete o'er ;
Lest weeds steal through, or drought make dusty breach—
For then a thousand foes will over-reach :

Offtimes the subterranean tiny mouse 210
Constructs his barn and keeps his private house,
Or wall-eyed moles have scoop'd their bedrooms deep,
And squatter toad sits in a chink asleep :
The myriad monsters teeming earth affords,
And weevils foul make boot upon thy hoards : 215
The pile diminishes ; while emmets sage
Provide against the bankruptcy of age.

Mark too what time the forest hazel trims
Her hood with flowers, and curves her fragrant limbs,
If bloom abound, so shall the season's wheat, 220
And mighty threshing come with mighty heat :
But if rank foliage shade the better half,
The thresher then shall pound away at chaff.

Full many a careful sower have I known
To drug and soak the seed before 'twas sown, 225
With nitre and black lees of oil, to swell
The kernel in the too deceitful shell :
But steep'd and steamed upon a slow fire too,
Myself have seen them, culled and sampled true,

Degenerate still, if human power forbear, 230
To choose out all the largest, every year.

Thus all things, sadly falling off, grow worse,
Relapsing, tottering, under nature's curse.
As one against the current, hard bested,
With desperate tugging strains his shallop's head, 235
If, for one breath, his brawny arms he stay,
Instant the torrent hurries him away.

Moreover, we must watch Arcturus' beam,
The rising of the Kids, the Serpent's gleam,
Like sailors tempest-toss'd, and homeward bound 240
Through Pontus, and pearl-famed Abydos' sound.

When Libra now hath balanced work and sleep,
Bisecting earth with light and shadow deep,
Urge on the bulls, sow barley o'er the plain,
E'en to the verge of surly Winter's rain. 245
Now sow the Cereal poppy-seed, and now
The flax, and lean full weight upon the plough,
While yet the favouring earth continues dry,
And clouds hang undetermined in the sky.

Sow beans in Spring, give saintfoin mellow land, 250
Nor grudge the millet's annual demand ;
When Taurus white with gilt horns opes the year,
And rising adverse, strikes the Dog with fear.

But if for sturdy wheat you till the plain,
And take your stand on nothing else but grain, 255
Let maids of Atlas in the morn go down,
And Gnosian star withdraw its burning crown,
Or ere you trust the furrows, and invest
The season's hope in earth's reluctant breast.
Too many will not wait till Maia set— 260
Then empty husks elude their harvest debt.

And wilt thou sow the vetch, and kidney-bean,
Nor proudly hold Pelusian leek too mean ?
Boötes setting will direct thee well,
Begin, and cease not till the frosts compel. 265

By twelve bright stars apportioning its girth,
The golden sun administers the earth.
Five zones enclasp the heavens, the central one
Is scorch'd with fire, and red with blazing sun.

Upon the right and left, the utmost twain 270.
Are block'd with icebergs blue and murky rain.
Between them and the midst, by gracious plan,
Two zones have been vouchsafed to helpless man.
Along them, where the ecliptic causeway lies,
Marches the stately order of the skies. 275
Earth mounts tow'rd Scythia and Rhipæan crest,
Tow'rd Southern Libya falls away depress'd,
This pole for ever towers above our head,
That lies below the Styx and nether dead.
Here the great Serpent draws his lithesome fold, 280
And, like a river, wends his path of gold,
Betwixt and round the sister Bears to glide,
(The Bears that shrink abash'd from ocean's tide.)
There doth the hush of timeless night entomb
For aye, and shadows move in curtain'd gloom ; 285
Or else fair morning, on her radiant way,
From us returning, leadeth home the day :
When fresh upon us pants her early team,
There rosy Hesper lights his dilatory beam.

The seasons hence and weather we foreknow, 290
The day of harvest and the time to sow ;
And when most safe and pleasant it may be
To skim with oars the smoothly treacherous sea,
To launch our fleet with all its tackle fine,
And topple down mature the greenwood pine ; 295
Nor idly note the stars that set and rise,
And earth's four seasons balanced in the skies.

When cold and wet make prisoner of the hind,
No lack of good employment shall he find,
To finish jobs at leisure, which, deferr'd 300
Until the busy sunshine, would be slurr'd.
The ploughman hammers out his batter'd share,
Scoops wooden troughs, and brands his fleecy care,
Or stamps the tallies on his sacks of corn,
Or sharpens stakes and forks with double horn ; 305
While others bend the osier Amerine,
To check the freedom of the gadding vine :
Now weave of bramble shoots your hampers neat,
Now parch, now grind upon a stone, your wheat.

Nay e'en when holy festival succeeds, 310
Both right and statute sanction certain deeds.
From pious scruples no one hath forborne
To lift the sluice or fence the standing corn,
To snare the birds, to fire the bramble stook,
And plunge the bleaters in the wholesome brook. 315
And oft the driver of the laggard ass
With oil and orchard apples loads his pack,
And leaving market, brings a millstone back,
A chisell'd stone, or pitch a sable mass.
The moon herself hath different days assign'd, 320
In different order, lucky, and unkind.
Dread thou the fifth. Pale Orcus then was yean'd,
And Furies; and the Earth, a labouring fiend,
Bore Cœus, Japetus, Typhœus cursed,
And brothers sworn the barrier'd heaven to burst. 325
Three times they tugg'd to pile the monster mole—
Ossa on Pelion,—and on Ossa roll
Olympus forest-crown'd. Three times the Sire
Demolish'd with his bolt the mountain spire.

Add seven to ten, and now your luck is full 330
To plant the vine, and tame the captured bull,
To fix the beam, and join the thrum and weft ;
The ninth is good for travel, bad for theft.

Thus many tasks the cool of night demand,
Or when the morn with sunrise pearls the land. 335
By night mow thirsty meads and stubble light,
For softening moisture faileth not the night.
And some, until the winter hearth grow dim,
Renew the watch, and shape the torches trim,
While, as her sprightly shuttle hums along, 340
The goodwife cheers their labour with a song,
Mulls on the hob the sweetwort simmering hot,
And takes a leaf to skim the chirping pot.

But reap the ruddy corn in noonday heat,
And leave till noon the threshing of the wheat. 345
Plough in your shirt-sleeves, in your shirt-sleeves sow ;
In winter-time all husbandry is slow.
In frost the farmers to their hoards repair,
And hospitality is all their care ;

Good fellowship maintains its jovial sway, 350

And genial Winter drives dull care away.

So, when the laden ship comes home to port,

The sailors crown the poop in grateful sport.

Yet Winter best for gathering mast will suit,

The bay, the olive, and red myrtle fruit ; 355

In Winter snare the crane and net the roe,

Chase prick-ear'd hares and pierce the bounding doe.

With whiz and twang of Balearic flax,

When snow lies deep and rivers push ice-packs.

The stars and storms autumnal shall I sing, 360

When days decrease and summer suns decline,

How men must watch ? Or when the close of spring

Descends in showers tempestuous and malign ;

When tufts of harvest ruffle o'er the plain,

And on the green stalk swells the milky grain ? 365

Oft have I seen—what time the farmer bold

Would guide the reaper through his realms of gold,

And strow the swath of barley—on them swoop

The warring fury of all winds a-whoop :

Up from the roots the pregnant corn is riven, 370
Swept up on high, and dash'd across the heaven,
Soaring away go reeds, and sheaves, and all,
In buoyant circles riding the black squall.
And oft the squadrons of great waters form,
And ocean-clouds amass the solemn storm : 375
Down falls the vaulted welkin, and the rain,
A rushing deluge, dashes ploughs and grain ;
The dikes are fill'd ; the hollow rivers roar ;
The sea lies hissing on its panting shore.

In midmost night of clouds the Father stands, 380
And holds the thunder hurtling in his hands ;
Whereat the vast earth lies aquake and pale,
The lions fly, the hearts of nations quail :
He, with the shaft of fire, in dust hath strawn
Athos, or Rhodopé, or high Ceraun : 385
With double fury rush the winds and rain,
While woods and shores wail to the hurricane.

In fear of this, observe the month and star,
Where Saturn's freezing planet roves afar,

To which of heaven's broad trackways shall retire, 390
In circling travel the Cyllenian fire.

First of the first, adore the gods, and now
To mighty Ceres pay thy yearly vow ;
Amid glad herbage offer gift and prayer,
When Winter falls away, and Spring is fair : 395
Then lambs are fat, and wines to suit one's will,
Then sleep is sweet, and shadows crowd upon the hill.

Let all your farm-lads bow at Ceres' shrine,
And mix her cakes with honey, milk, and wine :
Thrice round the crops the goodly victim bear, 400
While all the choir and merry neighbours share,
And Ceres' visit with a shout invoke ;

Let no man lay a sickle to the grain
Or ere in Ceres' honour, crown'd with oak,
He foot the unstudied dance and chant the strain. 405

And that we might by certain signs foreknow
The heat, the rain, the winds that drive the snow,
The Father of the world himself decreed
What good advice the monthly moon should read,

What sign betokens lull of storm, and when 410
The hind must keep the herd around the pen.

At once, when winds are rising, bay and bight
Begin to heave tumultuously white, }
A dry noise creaks along the mountain-height :

The long resounding shores of ocean quail, 415
The whispers of the wood become a wail.

The wave already scarce foregoes the hull,
When homeward from the offing flies the gull,
With screams borne inland by the blast ; and when
Sea-coots play round the margin of the fen. 420

The heron quits the marsh where she was bred,
And soars upon a cloud far overhead.

Nay, oft when wind hangs o'er us, thou shalt spy
The meteor stars shoot headlong down the sky,
And, through the shadow of the night appear 425
Long trains of whiteness flickering in their rear :
While dancing chaff and dead leaves flit away,
And feathers huddle on the pool to play.

When thunder comes from quarters of the North,
When Eastern halls and Western peal it forth ; 430
With brimming ditches swim the country vales,
And every seaman furleth dripping sails.
No storm bursts unforeseen : or ere it rise,
The soaring crane to dinged shelter hies ;
Or, gazing up at heaven with nostrils wide, 435
The heifer snuffs the breezes that betide :
Or round the lake the twittering swallows scud,
And frogs croak grandam ditties in the mud.

And oft the emmet from her snug abode
Brings out her eggs and plods a chary road : 440
The vasty rainbow drinks ; the crows fly home,
With jostling wings the cawing squadrons come.
The sundry sea-birds, and the birds that bore
The Asian marsh of sweet Caÿster's shore
With copious dews their bustling shoulders lave, 445
And duck quick heads beneath the curling wave,
Then deeper still into the breakers dash,
And frolic in extravagance of splash.

But stalking lonely on the arid plain,
The reprobate raven mightily croaks for rain. 450

Not e'en the maids, who ply their nightly toil,
Can fail to know the rising of the storm ;

In earthen lamps the sparkle of the oil
They spy, and on the wick the crumbs of mushroom form.

Nor less, when rain is passing, shalt thou glean 455

Clear tokens of bright sun, and broad serene ;

No more the edge of starlight balks the gaze,

The moon owes nothing to her brother's rays,

The sky is free from wisps of woolly haze. }

Then halcyons, loved by Thetis, spread no more 460

Their wings, to catch the sunshine on the shore.

Foul swine forget to toss their litter train,

The clouds hang low, and pillow on the plain :

And perch'd on high, the setting sun to view,

The owl insatiate plies his late to-whoo. 465

The kestrel Nisus hovers high in air,

And Scylla expiates the purple hair ;

Where'er the poor lark darting cleaves the wind,
Lo deadly villain kestrel swoops behind ;
Where'er fierce kestrel poises him behind, 470
She darting through the light air cleaves the wind.

Then thrice the crows compress their gurgling throats,
Or strain four times to fetch the guttural notes,
And in their high nests, wild with magic joys,
Make leafy stir and softly rustling noise ; 475
So fine it is, when storm and rain are o'er,
To see their nests and callow brood once more.

Not, as I think, that Gods in them create
True inborn mind, or foresight, lord of fate ;
But when the weather, and the fickle sky, 480
Have changed their track, and shifted wet and dry,
When Jove, with south winds reeking to the sense,
Makes dense the rare, and rarefies the dense,
New feelings rise, and other moods prevail,
Than while the clouds were scouring from the gale : 485
And hence from birds concerted music flows,
And cows go dance, and proudly guttural crows.

But if thou duly ponder and compute
The swift sun's travel and the moon's pursuit,
To-morrow's hour shall ne'er thy skill belie, 490
Nor starry nights cajole the practised eye.

When first the moon repairs her crescent light,
If she hath clasp'd, with hazy horns, the night,
A mighty shower is brewing for the swain,
A mighty shower impends upon the main. 495
But if she mantles with a maiden flush,
Wind will be ; wind makes golden Phoebe blush.

But if (her surest pledge), when four days old,
She pace the sky with horns of vivid gold,
The following day, and days thereafter born, 500
(A month complete,) both wind and wet shall scorn ;
While rescued sailors pay their vow'd desert
To Glaucus, Panope, and Melicert.

The sun as well your sign of signs shall be,
Both rising and when plunging in the sea ; 505
The surest signs the sun himself pursue,
Both when he rises, and when stars are due.

Now if he blur and dapple the young dawn,
 Bank'd in a cloud with half his disk withdrawn,
 Fear showers, and wild south-easters from the deep, 510
 Pernicious winds to fruit, and corn, and sheep.
 Or when, at break of day, with clouds bedight,
 Diverging rays present a fan of light ;
 Or when Aurora, from Tithonus' side,
 Forsakes her saffron couch, a pallid bride,— 515
 Ah, little then the vine-leaf shall avail
 To fend the mellow grapes—so full of bale
 Rattles the myriad pelting of the hail.

Yea even more thou shalt be taught thereby,
 When now the sun forsakes the traversed sky. 520
 For oft we see, upon his very face,
 Alternate colours flit in random chase ;
 Denouncing rain, if violet prevail ;
 A fiery red imports the eastern gale.
 But if red fire is blotch'd with streaks of black, 525
 In storm and rain the welkin shall go wrack.

That night let no one bid me tempt the main,
Or dare to cast adrift my mooring chain.

But if the sun restore, and when restored,
Compose the day with luminous accord, 530
No clouds shalt thou regard, but mark the trees
A-rustling in the bright north-eastern breeze.

In short, whate'er the deepening twilight brings,
Or whence the calm clouds float on airy wings,
What means the damp south wind—the sun shall tell, 535
And who shall dare to give the sun the lie?

Nay, oft he warns that dark alarms are nigh,
And treason, and conceal'd rebellion swell.

When Cæsar's light was quench'd in sudden fate,
The sun with pity view'd the Roman state, 540
With steel-blue haze he mask'd his forehead bright,
And godless ages fear'd eternal night.

Nay, earth itself gave token, and the sea,
And carrion hounds, and birds whom men must flee.
How oft we saw Mount Ætna's fiery moil 545
O'er all the meadows of the Cyclops boil,

From riven furnaces red billows roar,
And globes of flame, and molten rocks outpour.

The clank of arms in heaven Germania heard,
And quaking Alps with strange emotion stirr'd. 550

A voice tremendous thrill'd the silent wood,
And ghastly spectres in the gloaming stood.

Dumb cattle spake ; oh, horrible phantasm !
Rivers stand still, the earth is all a chasm.

Pale ivory in the holy temple weeps, 555
And sculptured bronze with sweat of horror creeps.

Eridanus, the monarch of the floods,
In ravening eddy whirls uprooted woods ;
Wide o'er the plains in weltering wreck he spreads
The cattle-corpses, and the cattle-sheds. 560

That year, the entrails ceased not to display
Dark presages, and fibres of dismay,
The wells to gush with blood ; and, ringing deep,
The howl of wolves startled the city's sleep.
Such lightnings ne'er the cloudless heaven amazed, 565
And ne'er before such awful comets blazed.

Philippi therefore saw the battle brunt,
Roman again met Roman, front to front :
Nor grudged the gods our heart's blood to manure
Emathia twice, and lonely Hæmus' moor. 570
Forsooth a time shall come, when there the swain,
With crooked plough uncovering the plain,
Shall strike on javelins gnaw'd with rusty flake,
Or batter empty morions with the rake,
And, turning over monumental stones, 575
Recoil in wonder from gigantic bones.

Ye Father-gods, of Roman birth and name,
Thou, Romulus, and Vesta, holy dame,
On Tuscan Tiber's bank who hast thy home,
And guardest well the palaces of Rome, 580
At least permit this youth, as we presage,
To prove the saviour of the ruin'd age.
Our blood has long flow'd fast enough to cloy
The vengeance on Laomedon and Troy.
For Cæsar long the court of heaven delays, 585
Indignant that he stoops to mortal bays :

Where right and wrong stand each in other's place,
Such worlds of war, such crimes of thousand face !
The plough that blesses, with no honour blest,
The fields gone frowsy, and the swains impress'd : 590
The reap-hook forged into the stark sword-blade,
Euphrates here, Germania there array'd !
Adjacent cities break their plighted faith,
And o'er the globe ride hellish War and Death.

So four-horsed chariots, at the word to race, 595
Dash from the bars, and fling themselves on space,
Whirl'd at the horses' will the driver strains,
Full speed they scour, and laugh to scorn the reins.





THE GEORGICS.

BOOK THE SECOND.



HUS far of tillage, and the starry signs—

Now thee I sing, great Bacchus, god of vines,

The birth, moreover, of the greenwood-tree,

And slow-grown olive, I will sing with thee.

Lenæan father, visit us awhile ;

5

Here all the world is smiling in thy smile ;

The vine presents her Autumn to thy sip,

And foams the vintage o'er the wine-tub's lip ;

Lenæan father, come, and, buskin-free,

Imbrue thy feet in purple must with me.

10

First, different trees have divers birth assign'd ;
For some lack no compulsion of mankind,
But spring spontaneously in every nook,
Peopling the meadows and the mazy brook ;
Thus osiers lithe, and brooms that gently play, 15
The poplar, and the willow silver-grey.

And some arise from seed themselves have shed ;
For so the chesnut rears its lofty head,
The bay-oak, towering monarch of the wood,
And oaks with Grecian oracles endued. 20

But others densely stool up from the root,
A forest new, as elms and cherries shoot ;
Nay, even thus the young Parnassian bay,
Beneath the mother's shadow, feels her way.

These methods nature gave ; hence all the sheen 25
Of woods, and shrubs, and bowery chapels green.

But other modes there are which practice hath
Discover'd for herself on labour's path.
Shoots from the mother's tender form, with skill,
One gardener trims, and plants along the drill ; 30

Another roughly buries stocks uncut,
And stakes four-cleft, and poles with sharpen'd butt.
Some trees demand the arching layer's coil,
And thriving nurseries in the mother soil.
Some lack no root, no pruner need mistrust
To lay the leader in its native dust.

35

Nay more, the olive-stump is cleft in twain,
And, strange to tell, the dry wood roots again !

And oft the branches of one tree we find
Saucily alter'd to another kind,
On wild pear-stocks engrafted pippins come,
And stony cornels blush upon the plum.

40

Then list, ye swains, the culture I describe
For each, according to his class and tribe :
By culture tame the wildings, and convert,
Nor let an inch of surface lie inert :
Ismarian crags enamel with the vine,
And drape with olive mount Taburno's chine.

45

Ho thou, Mæcenás ! great and glorious name,
By right and fact, my better half of fame,

50

Be nigh, be pilot of the voyage with me ;
A flowing sheet upon so broad a sea.
Not all things would I grasp that I can feel,
Though hundred tongues were mine and voice of steel.

Come thou, and hug the very brink of land ; 55
Safe in the arms of mother earth we stay,
I will not mock thee yet with fabled lay,
Through many a winding and premisals grand.

The trees that spring, with no man to invite,
And climb spontaneous to the shores of light, 60
Unfruitful are, but lusty from their birth,
Because strong nature underlies the earth.

Yet even these, if grafted well or moved,
And set in trenches with the soil improved,
Cast by their wildwood mind, and nursed in ease, 65
Come blithely into any style you please.

Nay, barren suckers from the root will bear
When planted out with liberal space and air :
Their mother's foliage shrouds them now in gloom,
And robs the growing buds, and starves the bloom. 70

But slowly comes the tree which thou hast sown,
 A canopy for grandsons of thine own :
 Degenerate fruits forget their taste and shape,
 And birds make boot upon the worthless grape.
 So all cost trouble, all must be compell'd
 To keep their drill, by constant labour quell'd.

75

But olives answer better from the stock,
 And Paphian myrtles from the solid block ;
 The vine from layers, and from offsets spring
 Hard hazels, and the ash the forest-king,
 The tree whose chaplets shade Alcides' brow,
 And Chaon Father's mast-producing bough :
 And thus the lofty palm bedecks the plain,
 And fir design'd for hardships on the main.

80

But nuts are grafted on the rough arbut, 85
 And barren planes bear apple-trees in fruit :
 With chesnut bloom the beech is silver-laid,
 The mountain-ash in white pear-flowers array'd,
 And swine crunch acorns in the elm-tree shade.

}

Nor is the mode to bud and graft the same—

90

For where the buds, (like emeralds in their frame,)
 Push'd forth the bark, their filmy jerkins split,

A narrow eyelet through the crown is slit ;

Herein the germ, a stranger, they compress,

And teach with juicy rind to coalesce.

95

To graft—the knotless trunks are lopp'd amain,

And cleft with wedges deep into the grain,

Then fruitful scions are enclosed ; nor long

Till a great tree with laughing boughs leaps out,

And looks up with astonishment and doubt,

100

At stranger leaves, and fruit that must be wrong.

Nay, passing that, more kinds than one there be

Of elm and willow, lote and cypress tree :

Plump olives, too, distinctive features own,

Orchads, and Rays, and Bruisers tart of tone.

105

So apples and Phæacian orchards gleam

With divers hues ; and pears diversely teem,

Crustumian, Syrian, and the big voleme.

}

A different grape bedecks these elms of ours
 Than Lesbos gathers in Methymna's bowers ; 110
 And Thasian vines there are, and Mareots white,
 One fit for heavy land, and one for light :
 And Psythian best for raisins, and Lagene
 (Shrewd sort to test the feet and tongue, I ween) ;
 Purple, and Rathripe ; Rhætic, too, shall earn 115
 My proudest verse, yet challenge not Falern !
 Vines Aminæan, firmest wine ; and more,
 Where Tmolus and the king Phanæüs soar :*
 And small Argitis, which no rival fears,
 To gush so full, or keep so many years. 120
 And shall I slight, ye gods of the repast,
 Your Rhodian pet, and turgid-bunch'd Bumast ?
 But hold—ye kinds that urge unnumber'd claims—
 What use to give a catalogue of names ?

* In spite of great authorities, I scarcely think that "assurgit" means here to "do homage." Because Virgil used it *once*, in a metaphorical sense, must he always use it so? The metaphor here would be very harsh, especially if we read "Tmolius."

Who seeks to learn it, let him score the sand 125
The west wind hurls upon the Libyan strand,
Or, when east winds upon the roadstead roar,
Ionian surges rolling to the shore.

Not every soil will every tree adorn ;
The willows by the river marge are born, 130
The alders still the fat morass prefer,
The barren wild-ash loves the mountain spur :
The shores with myrtle laugh ; the grape-vines woo
The upland sun, north winds and frost the yew.

Now mark the world and them that dwell therein— 135
Her utmost confines, e'en the Arab's home,
And where Geloni in their war-paint roam—

Each tree shall claim its fatherland and kin.
Black ebon grows on Indian ground alone,
While Sheba waves the incense-spray her own. 140
Why sing of balsam's perfumed sweat to thee,
And pods of evergreen acanthus tree ?
Of Ethiop forests hoar with fluttering fleece,
And downy foliage carded by Chinese ?

The woods of India, hard by ocean's roar, 145
The furthest elbow of the round world's shore ?
No flight of arrow may surmount the breeze
Which fans the summit of those Indian trees ;
Although the native archer be not slack,
With bow in hand, and quiver on his back. 150

The kindly citron Media doth produce,
Of clammy savour and of acrid juice ;
No medicine hath more vigorous control,
When fell stepmothers drug the murder bowl,
And mingle herbs of death and glamour strains— 155
The citron scours their poison from the veins :
The tree is huge, and like a bay in frame,
And, if the scent it scatters was the same,
A bay it were ; the leaves defy the blast,
And stedfast clings the blossom to the last. 160
Herewith the Medes their lips and breath perfume,
And save asthmatic grandsires from the tomb.
But neither Median woods of wealth untold,
Nor Ganges fair, nor Hermus red with gold,

With Italy may vie ; nor Bactrian grain, 165
Nor Ind, nor Sheba sleek with spicy plain.
Our land no bulls, with snorted fire for breath,
Have plough'd, no dragon's teeth have sown with death :
No harvest barb'd with helmet and with spear—
Our rank and file the serried wheaten ear, 170
Our bloodshed but the Massic vineyard's flow,
Where olives reign and sportive cattle low.

Hence proudly doth the charger paw the plain,
Hence snowy flocks, and bulls of lordly strain,
Besprent, Clitumnus, with thy stream divine, 175
Lead Roman triumphs to the altar shrine.
Here constant spring and summer charm the year,
Twice yeon the flocks, and twice the fruit-trees bear.
No tigers prowl, no savage lion seed ;
No aconites the luckless hand mislead : 180
No serpent monster loops along the ground,
Or coils his scaly stretch in endless spirals round.

Then add, to all these products of the soil,
Our noble cities and constructive toil,

On beetling crags our castles' proud array, 185

And rivers gliding under bastions grey.

Why tell of ocean spread on either side,

The wash of upper and of nether tide ?

The lakes so vast, great Larius, and thee,

Benacus, rough and roaring like the sea? 190

Why tell of ports and barriers of Lucrine ?

Where sullen surges lash the weather line,

While Julian waters murmur safe inside,

And Tuscan ripples through Avernus glide.

Our land as well the silver duct doth hold, 195

The copper veins, the gushing flood of gold.

Our land produceth men of sterling truth,

The Marsian warrior, the Sabellian youth,

The stern Ligurian disciplined by ill,

The javelin'd Volscians,—and, more glorious still, 200

The Decii, Marii, and Camilli great,

The sons of Scipio grim in warlike state.

And paramount of all, grand Cæsar, thee,

Who now, from Asia's far extremity,

In march of triumph scarest to their home 205
The Indians quailing at the towers of Rome.

Hail, land of plenty, Saturn's loved estate,
Mother of corn, and mother of the great !
Time-honour'd fame and art my theme shall be,
Unsealing wells of holy song for thee ; 210
And, through the Roman townships, I am fain
To sing the lay of Ascra o'er again.

Now room to give each croft its special dower,
Its staple, colour, and productive power.
And first, the churlish soils, and crabbèd gnolls, 215
(A lean argill, where scattered shingle rolls,)
These bosky scrublands minister and cheer
The tough-lived olive to Minerva dear.
For proof—see how wild olives there abound,
And woodland-berries loosely strew the ground. 220

A buttery loam, with sugary juices blest,
And swarded well, and kindly full of breast—
The slope we see, in nether distance sweet,
Where mountain valleys trend to waters-meet,

Where runnels melting from the topmost peak 225
Are filtering, drop by drop, a jovial reek,
A slope that woos the south at every turn,
And feeds that enemy of ploughs the fern—
This soil will breed in rampant health the vine,
And gushing with a perfect wealth of wine ; 230
A mass of grapes in clusters manifold—
The juice we sip from flagons and from gold ;
When the fat Tuscan puffs his altar pipe,
And chargers bend beneath the smoking tripe.

But if thou carest more for calves and kine, 235
Or lambs or kids (those blisterers of the vine)—
Seek thou the glades of smug Tarentum's coast,
Or such a park as hapless Mantua lost,
With snow-white swans upon the lilled deep,
And limpid wells, and pasturage for sheep ; 240
And all the kine browse in a summer's day
The cooling dews of one brief night repay.

Black earth, and fat beneath the ploughshare's weight
(A mealy soil, which ploughs do imitate)

Is best for corn ; no other whence shall come 245
Such laden waggons slowly crawling home :
Or where the grumbling swain hath clear'd the wood,
And idle copse, that hath for ages stood,
Then root and branch the old bird-castles fell,
Away they soar out of their nests pell-mell : 250
Anon, beneath the onset of the share,
Glossily breaks the maiden earth laid bare.

For hungry brash, and highlands, scarce afford
Low casia and sweet rosemary for bees ;
And gritty tophe lies barren on the leas, 255

And hunks of chalk by black chelyders bored :*
No other field, they say, such victual makes,
And winding lairs, and harbourage for snakes.

The soil that breathes thin mist and flitting haze,
And quaffs the dew, and at its will repays, 260

* Not even Conington can persuade me that "tofus," and "creta," were meant to be the nominatives to "negant." He seems (if one may presume to trust common sense against such scholarship) to be misled, and not here alone, by extreme deference to Servius.

Self-clad for ever in a robe of green,
Nor apt to dim the spade with salt gangrene—
There olives teem, and there the elm shall twine
The gay embroidery of the laughing vine.
By farming that land, thou shalt prove it kind
To cattle, and to ploughing well inclined :
Rich Capua hath it, and Vesevan slopes,
And Clanius, deaf to lorn Acerra's hopes.

265

Now hearken how to test each soil ; and if
Thou wouldst discern light staple from the stiff,
(Since one is best for corn and one for vines,
The stiff for grain, the light for noble wines :)
Beforehand let a proper place be found,
Then sink a shaft deep in the solid ground,
Then shovel back the mould without delay,
And stamp the surface level as you may :
Light soil it is, if still the pit shall gape,
A soil for cattle and the genial grape.
But if the clods forswear their old abode,
And overpile the brim when all are stow'd,

270

275

280

The soil is close—look out for hummocks here,
And stubborn chines, and yoke your strongest steer.

A salt, and what is call'd a bitter loam,
Affords the corn no happiness of home ;
It mellows not with ploughing ; nor supports 285
Grapes true to name, or apples true to sorts.
To test it, rescue from the roof-tree dust,
Thick-osier'd maunds, and strainers of the must :
Herein that wicked soil compactly tread,
And water sweet, fresh from the fountain-head : 290
The water soon will fight its passage thence,
Ay, and the big drops trickle through their fence,
But proof condign their flavour will supply,
And sense of bitter twist the lips awry.

So too, when earth is over-fat, we can 295
Detect its grossness by a simple plan :
Though toss'd from hand to hand, it will not flake,
But stick like pitch, and to the fingers cake.

A watery soil too rank a growth will feed,
And over-rampant makes more haste than speed ; 300

Ah, tempt me not with that luxuriant field,
Too winter-proud and powerful to yield!

A heavy and a light earth fall, if weigh'd,
Without a parley, known and self-betray'd.
Our eyes can read the hues from black to white,
But not that cursèd chill that breeds the blight,
Pitch-trees, and baleful yews, and ivy black,
Sole tenants, here and there, bewray its track.

305

This done, bethink thee well, to season deep
The maiden loam, and trench the hilly sweep,
To northern gales parade the clods supine,
Ere planting that bright family of vine.

310

A mealy soil is found the prime of land,
And this effect the searching winds command,
The penetration of the frost and cold,
And brawny spadesman heaving the loose mould.

315

But they, who seize precaution as it flies,
Select a quarter, for their nurseries,
Like that where soon the fruiting plants are grown,
Lest these discard a mother not their own.

320

Nay more, the aspect on the rind they mark,
That each may stand exactly as it stood,
With face to noon, and back to northern arc—
So custom lords it o'er the youthful wood.

Now first inquire, if wiser it be found 325
To plant the vine on hills or level ground.
Plant closely, if thou mark a fat champaign,
The closeness will not make the wine-god wane :
But if the slope a waving outline shows,
And hilly stretch ; be liberal to your rows : 330
Despite the ground, let every path and vine
Be boned exact, and squared by cutting line.

As oft, in vasty war, a legion train
Deploys its cohorts on the open plain,
The marching column dresses into line, 335
And all the country waves with weapon-shine ;
Nor yet they mingle in the bickering close.
But Mars uncertain stalks between the foes.

So dress thy vistas, and array them true,
To feed the sauntering fancy with the view. 340

And, more than this, that all have equal share
Of vital earth, and equal reach of air.

But, an thou ask, how deep the trench must be—
The vine set shallow is enough for me.

More deeply delve, and plant with broader stroke 345

The standard tree, and most of all bay-oak ;

That tree, howe'er his head usurps the gale,

So far his roots the nether world assail.

Therefore no fury of the winter cold,

No blast, no storm, can tear him from his hold ; 350

Unmoved he stands, and, through a thousand years,

Unfolds and conquers many an age of man,

And, spreading wide his arms a glorious span,

Resides within the giant shade he rears.

Let not your vineyards to the west incline, 355

Nor mix the planted hazel with the vine ;

Nor choose the lashing tips, nor strip your eyes

From topmost wood—so much the earth they prize.

Nor wound with blunted knife the tender shoot,

Nor plant wild olive trunks amid your fruit. 360

For oft the careless shepherd drops a spark,
Which lies perdu beneath the oily bark ;
Then grasps the wood, and, flickering as it soars
High up the foliage, to the welkin roars,
Then follows through the limbs, with victor tread, 365
And rides enthroned above the towering head,
And wraps the grove in flames, and tosses high
A cloud of pitchy darkness to the sky :
And most of all when lowering tempests break,
And gusts in volleys sweep the blazing flake. 370

Where this hath been, no more the vines can shoot,
No pruning give new vigour to the root ;
Like verdure never more shall clothe the ground,
But olives wild with bitter leaves abound.

Let none tell thee, however much he knows, 375
To stir the stiff soil when the north wind blows :
Then winter bars the field, forbidding e'en
The seed to strike its frozen root between.

For planting vines, the blush of Spring is best,
When comes the white bird whom the snakes detest ; 380

Or first autumnal cold, when halts the sun
On Winter's verge, and Summer's course is run.

So Spring befriends the forest and the mead,
In Spring the plump earth craves the vital seed :

Then Air, almighty father, raining life, 385

Sinks on the bosom of his laughing wife ;

All growth he feeds, commingling with the same,

The mighty Spirit in the mighty frame.

Then birds make music to the pathless groves,

And herds and flocks prove faithful to their loves : 390

The kind earth gives her increase, and the West

With fluttering warmth unzones the meadow's breast.

Soft dew is shed on all, and flowers are won

To trust their beauty to the stranger sun.

No more the vine-growth dreads the southern blast, 395

Or showers from heaven by mighty north winds cast ;

But pushes forth the gems herself conceives,

And opes the crinkled modesty of leaves.

Such days, I trow, at the infancy of earth,
Shone forth, and kept the tenor of their birth ; 400

True Spring was that, the world was bent on Spring,
And eastern breezes check'd their wintry wing :

While cattle drank new light, and man was shown,
A race of iron from a land of stone ;

Then savage beasts were launch'd upon the grove, 405
And constellations on the heaven above ;

Nor could young Nature have achieved the birth,
Unless a period of repose so sweet

Had come to pass, betwixt the cold and heat,
And heaven's indulgence greeted the new earth. 410

For what remains—whene'er you plant be sure
To mulch abundantly with rich manure,

And bank them up with earth, or mingle well
With porous stone dug in, or grimy shell ;

For so the rain shall trickle, and the breeze 415
Steal in, and buoy the spirits of the trees.

And some there are, who cover up awhile
With rocky slab, or breadth of massive tile ;

Protection this against the pouring rain,
Or when the drought of Sirius cracks the plain. 420

When all are planted, draw the earth around
Their necks full often, and fork up the ground ;
Or work the soil beneath the plough, and guide
The struggling steers adown the alley side ;
Then fix smooth rods, and shafts of sapling shorn, 425
And ashen stakes, and forks with double horn,
Whereon they may defy the tempest's might,
And climb espalier'd up the elm-tree height.

But while young life is nestling delicate
In callow leaflets, spare their tender state ; 430
And while the glad shoots frolic on the breeze,
Loose-rein'd on space, and prancing as they please,
Apply not yet the pruning falchion keen,
But nip them with your nails, and thin between ;
Until they hug the elms with hearty strain, 435
Then strip their locks, and clip their arms amain :
Till then they shrink from steel ; then bravely play
The iron Lord, and check the flaunting spray.

A hedge, moreover, must be wattled proof,
To keep the herds of every kind aloof ; 440

Especially while soft and debonair
The maiden leafage laughs at future care :
Though soon to prove (besides the frost's affront,
And sunny onset of the summer's brunt)
The sport of forest bulls, and roes malign, 445
And browsing ewes, and gormandising kine.
Nor doth the cold, with white frost matted stiff,
Nor summer's sheer dint on the sultry cliff,
Annoy like these, with venom'd tushes' cark,
And scar indented on the nibbled bark. 450

And hence a goat, the Wine-god's victim, dies,
When ancient pastimes enter on the stage,
And Theseus' sons award the village prize,
Beside the cross-roads, where the wits engage ;
While rustics, tippling on the velvet sward, 455
Are dancing upon bladders smear'd with lard.

Ausonian farmers too, a Trojan race,
Rude carols troll, and grin with broad grimace ;
Grotesque and hideous are the masks they wear,
The which themselves of hollow cork prepare : 460

They hail thee, Bacchus, in their jocund lines,
And hang thy puppets swaying on the pines.

So, in the heyday of their fruitage lush,
The vineyards teem, the nestling valleys blush,
The dingles, and the deep lands, and where'er 465
The God, parading, shows his forehead fair.
To Bacchus, then, right grateful will we sing
Our native lay, and cakes and chargers bring ;
Led by the horn the felon goat shall stand,
While reeking entrails roast on hazel wand. 470

But still the vineyard-dresser must pursue
That other task which none can over-do,
For thrice and four times, each succeeding year,
The caking surface must be cloven sheer,
The clods for ever fork'd across and straight, 475
And all trees lighten'd of their leafy weight.

Farm-labour ever in a round comes back,
And rolling twelvemonths beat their beaten track.
What time the vine her sere leaf lays aside,
And cold north winds smite down the forest pride, 480

E'en then the gardener, keen amid his cheer,
Forecasts the business of the coming year,
With Saturn's hook the widow'd vine pursues,
And pruning forms her as himself may choose.

Be first to dig the ground, and first right soon 485
To make a bonfire of the shoots you prune ;
Be first to carry home and stack your props,
Be last to gather in the vintage crops.
Twice every year the leaf-shade coops the bine,
And twice the weeds and brambles choke the vine, 490
Hard trials both will prove ; then take the alarm,
Applaud a large, but work a little farm.

Rough butcher-broom as well you must provide,
And osiers wild, and flags from river side.
Now vines are train'd, the hook may now repose, 495
The tired swain sings completion of his rows.
Still must we vex the earth, and stir the clod,
And ripening grapes must fear the Weather-god.

But olive-trees, unlike the vineyard, look
For culture none, nor sweep of pruning-hook, 500

Nor clogging harrows lack, when, rooted fast,
They once have hugg'd the soil, and borne the blast.
For them the earth, when once unclotted loose
With talon'd fork, vouchsafes spontaneous juice,
And quicken'd by the share gives large increase ;
Then nurse the olive, a plump bride for peace.

505

Fruit-trees, moreover, soon as they have known
The vigour of the stock become their own,
Push jostling upward by their native powers,
To starry heaven, and ask no aid of ours.
Nor less the wild grove bows its fruitful head,
And thorny bird-homes blush with berries red.

510

Then clover-shrubs are mown that flocks may share ;

The deep wood ministers its fuel, so

That evening fires may feed their merry glow—
And can we doubt to plant and lavish care ?

515

Why need I follow every forest-tree ?

The willows and the lowly brooms for me !

Leaves for the flock, and shade for swains they yield,
And food for bees, and fences for the field.

520

How sweet to see Cytorus waving rich
With box, and forests of Narycian pitch !
To see the plains no whit beholden there
To harrows, or to any human care !
The very woods, upon Caucasian steep, 525
(Which violent east winds ever crash and sweep,)
Give various growth, the pine so staunch at sea,
For houses cedar, and the cypress tree :
Hence spokes are planed, and wagon block-wheels made,
And raking keels for rustic shallops laid, 530
Willow for bines, and elms for fodder good,
For spear-shafts myrtle, and stout cornel-wood :
To bows of Ityra the yew is bent,
And lindens smooth accept the tool's intent ;
The box-tree, on the lathe so clean to shave, 535
Is hollow'd as the whetted gouges grave.
Yea, many a time, the buoyant alder wood
Is launch'd on Po, and swims the torrent-flood :
Yea, many a time, the bees swarm, out of ken,
In hollow bark, and canker'd Ilex wen. 540

The gifts of Bacchus, what can they produce
So rich in glory, and so full of use ?

Nay, Bacchus hath been cause of crime and woe ;

'Twas he who laid the raging Centaurs low,

Rhœtus, and Pholus, and Hylæus dread,

545

Who swung the bowl above the Lapith's head.

Oh, happy farmers ! overblest, I wis,

If they could only realize their bliss !

For whom the earth, away from jangling strife,

In just abundance sheds the gifts of life.

550

Although no haughty castle-gates have pour'd

A flood of serfs, to hail their risen lord ;

Nor gloat they on buhl columns, as they pass,

Robes shot with gold, and Ephyreän brass ;

Nor snowy wool is daub'd with Tyrian paint,

555

Nor limpid oil bedrugg'd with casia's taint :

But tranquil rest, and life too pure for harm,

A life endow'd with every simple charm,

But yeoman's ease, and broad lands of repose,

And grots, and lakes, where living water flows,

560

Cool Tempe's glade, and sleep beneath the trees,
And lowing kine—no lack have they of these.

Here are the woodlands, and the wild beast's lair,

And youth robust, content with humble fare ; 564

God hath his honour, holy age its charm ;

When Justice fled this world of sin and harm,

She left her latest footprint on the farm.

Me first accept, ye Muses sweet and fair,

Whose sacred gifts, with thrilling love, I bear ;

To me the ways and stars of heaven intune, 570

The sun's eclipse, the travail of the moon ;

Why quakes the earth, why seas lift up their pride,

Break bounds, and back upon themselves subside ;

How winter suns in ocean plunge so soon,

And what belates the timid nights of June. 575

But if, lest I profane this hallow'd part,

Queen Nature chills the blood around my heart ;

At least permit me to indulge my dream

Of meads, and valleys, and the mazy stream :

Be woods and waves my unambitious love, 580

And oh, the fields where doth Sperchius rove!

And mount Taÿgeta, where oft have been

The vintage frolics of the Spartan maid :

Oh, who will set me in cool Hæmus' glade,

And shield me with a canopy of green ! 585

Thrice blest the man whom mighty genius brings

To know the cause and origin of things :

Beneath his feet lie destiny and dread ;

He walks the roaring waters of the dead.

And blest is he who knows the farmer's God, 590

Where Pan, Sylvanus, and the Nymphs have trod.

No Consul's axe, no Emperor's purple state,

No broil that breeds fraternal lies and hate,

No Dacian horde from Ister's dark cabal,

Nor Roman pomp, nor kingdoms raised to fall— 595

Nought recks he these, nor frets away his health,

Through pain at want, or jealousy of wealth.

Whatever fruit the branches, and the mead,

Spontaneous bring, he gathers for his need ;

Nor sees the forum in its frantic time, 600
The iron laws, the calendars of crime.

While others vex dark Hellespont with oars,
Leap on the sword, or dash through royal stores,
Storm towns and homesteads, in their vile desire
To quaff from pearl, and sleep on tints of Tyre ; 605
While others hoard and brood on buried dross,
And some are moonstruck at the pleader's gloss ;
While this man gapes along the pit, to hear
The mob and senators renew their cheer ;
And others, reeking in fraternal gore, 610
With songs of triumph quit their native shore,
Abjure sweet home for banishment, and run
In quest of country 'neath another sun—

Meanwhile the farmer speeds the plough amain,
Awakes the earth, and opes the year's campaign, 615
Supports his country, and his children rears,
And feeds his kine and well-deserving steers.
No time but what the lavish seasons greet
With fruit, or firstlings, or with sheaves of wheat,

And load the croft, and burst the barn with wealth : 620

'Tis winter now, the oil-press groans with fruit,
The mast-fed swine come frisking full of health,

And still the forest offers red arbute :

Ripe Autumn spreads her opulence of stock,
And mellow vintage streaks the sunny rock. 625

Sweet children cluster round the farmer's kiss,
The chaste home keeps the innocence of bliss.

The cows stand full of milk, and on the grass

Fat kids cross horns, to try a sportive pass.

The farmer, in the midst, keeps holiday, 630

And, while his co-mates crown the bumpers gay,

Beside the bonfire, stretch'd upon the sod,

Invites and pledges thee, O Vintage-god !

Marks elms for targets to his shepherds' aim,

And bares their muscle for the rustic game. 635

This life of yore the early Sabines led,

And so were Romulus and Remus bred ;

Thus brave Etruria flourish'd from her birth,

And Rome was made the fairest thing on earth ;

She compass'd with a wall the mountains seven,

640

Herself in unity confronting heaven.

Nay, e'en before Dictæan tyrant's reign,

Before the innocent young beeves were slain,

For godless men their greedy lust to sate,

Our golden Saturn kept this earthly state ;

645

Before the nations heard the clarion's peal,

Or anvils vibrant to the ring of steel :—

But lo, how far we have scour'd across the lea !

'Tis time to cast our smoking horses free.





APOLOGY.

1871.



TEN years of trouble and mistaken scope,
Since first I dared the "Farm and Fruit
of old,"
O'er me and my unfruitful farm have roll'd,
To prune audacity, and weed out hope.

Oh, fruitless labour, both of hand and head !

The former struck by frost and tempest-strew'd,

The latter (praised by some, by all eschew'd)

Hath stood a decade, but hath not been read.

And he, who foremost of the world could aid,
To harmonise the lines, to prune and dress,
To make the fruitage more, the leafage less,
Alas ! untimely hath let drop the spade.

And whom, amid the war-blast and alarm
Of taurine* clash, and worse than wild-hog's* riot
(No pinch† of dust, no seas of blood may quiet)
Can Pales, or can Aristæus charm ?

Yet such audacity old hope displays,
(That thousand-rooted, million-headed weed—
The hottest bonfire but matures its seed!)
I am driven back unto my hopeful ways.

Come, ye who love the sweet sleep of the fold,
And cadence of the vespers of the hive ;
While wrong, and wrath, and requisitions thrive,
Take shelter with the " Kine and Bees of old."

* Georg. iii. 222 and 255.

† Ibid. iv. 87.



THE GEORGICS.

BOOK THE THIRD.



F thee as well, great Pales, will I sing,
And thee, famed shepherd from Amphrysus'
spring,

· Ye woods and floods Lycæan : all beside,
Which might have charm'd our leisure, hath been tried.
To whom is stern Eurystheus unexpressed, 5
Or altars of Busiris the unblest ?
Who hath not sung boy Hylas, long ere we,
Latonian Delos, and Hippodamé ?
With ivory shoulder Pelops keen to drive
Pre-eminent—some way I must outstrive, 10

To lift me also from the ground, and then
A flight of triumph on the lips of men !

I first, from Aon height (if life abide),
The muses to my fatherland will guide ;
Idume's palms I first will carry home,
And on the broad green rear a marble dome,
For thee, sweet Mantua, by the waterside,
Where Mincio wanders with slow windings wide,
And fringes with the damask reed his tide.

15

The centre of my pomp shall Cæsar be ;
And fill my temple with his majesty.
His champion, I, in Tyrian purple brave,
Will drive a hundred war-cars to the wave.
From Pisa's river, and Molorchus' glade,
For bouts of rugged cæstus and the stade,
All Greece shall throng ; while I the offerings bear,
With garland of trim olive round my hair.

25

E'en now unto the chancel I am fain
To lead high pomp, and see young oxen slain ;

Or let the scene with shifted fronts divide, 30

And woven Britons raise the purple slide.

Upon the doors a battle-piece in gold,

And massive elephant, myself will mould ;

Gangarid triumphs of Quirinus bold.

Lo, surged with war, and rolling big, the Nile ! 35

And rear'd of naval bronze columnar pile !

All Asia quell'd, Niphates backward hurl'd,

And Parthian train'd in flight to bend the bow ;

Twain trophies also from wide-sunder'd foe ;

And twice in triumph led the extremest world. 40

And here shall stones of Paros have their place,

A breathing group, Assaracus his race,

The names direct from Jove without alloy,

Old Tros, the sire, and Cynthius, source of Troy. 44

Grim envy shall before the Furies quake,

And stern Cocytus, and Ixion's snake,

And monster wheel, and crag that none may overtake.

Meanwhile, Mæcenus, haste we to invade

The Dryad forest and the virgin glade ;

No easy task thou orderest ; but arise ! 50

The mind without thee hath no high emprise :

Break sloth's dull fetters—hark, Cythæron's shout !

The hounds of all Taygetus are out ;

Queen Epidaure of steeds ; and all around

Applauding forests echo rolling sound. 55

Yet soon must I in curter beltage fare,

Great Cæsar's burning battles to declare,

And through as many years prolong his fame

As Cæsar may from old Tithonus claim.

Now whoso coveteth Olympic meed, 60

The conqueror's palm, and reareth generous steed,

Or whoso craveth strong ox for the share,

The mother's shape must be his special care.

The best of form, a grimly visaged cow,

With head uncouth, and neck more than enow, 65

With dewlaps hanging from the jowl to shank,

And most unreasonable length of flank ;

All over large ; the very foot is so,

And bristling ears inarching horns below.

Myself would not a dappled white one scorn, 70
Shy of the yoke, and gruff to show her horn,
With bull-like face, and quarters straight and high,
Whose tail in walking sweeps her footsteps dry.

The age Lucina claims, and Hymen's due,
Is past ere ten, though scarce at four come true: 75
Unmeet the rest alike for plough or stock ;
Then while gay youth still lords it o'er the flock,
Untie the males, right early mate thy kine,
And, one from other, resupply the line.

Alas ! poor mortals, every brightest day, 80
Ere truly felt, is first to fade away !
Soon comes disease, and age that moans for breath,
And labour, and no mercy of grim death.

Among thy stock must ever be a few
Thou fain wouldst better ; ever then renew ; 85
For fear a loss too late to mend be thine,
Prevent, and yearly choose the heirs of kine.

Nor is there less of care and art bestow'd
About the choice of cattle for the road.

Whatever for the nation's hope you rear, 90
At once spend trouble on the tender year.

The colt of gentle breeding treads the plain
With loftier step and delicate refrain ;
He first to tempt the road or rampant tide,
And launch himself upon a bridge untried. 95

At idle sounds he starteth not in dread ;
High-arch'd his neck and tapering is his head ;
His back is plump, his barrel curtly drawn ;
His fiery breast luxuriates with brawn.

Bright bay and grey a good repute have won, 100
But worst of colour are the white and dun.

Then if afar the clash of arms he hears,
Stand still he cannot, up he pricks his ears ;
He thrills in every fibre of his frame,

His snorting nostrils pour embodied flame ; 105

O'er the right shoulder sweeps his clustering mane,
His channel'd spine runs broad enough for twain ;
He scoops the hard earth, pawing it in scorn,
And thunders with a hoof of massive horn.

E'en such was Cyllarus, of noble strain, 110
 By Amcylæan Pollux brought to rein ;
 And such the yoke-mates of the god of war,
 (Whom Greeks have sung), and great Achilles' car :
 Thus Saturn, 'scaped beyond connubial check,
 Flung loose the mane upon his equine neck, 115
 From wifely interference frisk'd away,
 And fill'd Mount Pelion with his shrilly neigh.

But if from ailment grave he lose the race,
 Or stiff with years—still keep him the old place,
 And pardon age that keenly feels disgrace. }

Unapt for love the veteran appears, 121
 And labour is ungracious at his years ;
 And if he come to conflict, all in vain
 (Like fire in stubble) fury he would feign.
 So heed thee well the mettle and the age, 125
 And all their other traits and parentage ;
 And what their sorrow to have lost the prize,
 And how they revel in their victories.

See you how swift they have swallow'd up the plain,
Chariots, out of the barriers dash'd amain ! 130
When hope of youth stands tiptoe, and hot fear
Knocks at the bounding heart of each compeer ;
With the' whistle of the lash, they stoop, and fling
Rein upon neck—the hot axle on the wing :
Now down they go, and now they are toss'd on high, 135
To ride the void air, and to mount the sky ;
No stop, no tarrying—neck, or nought, they must—
Over them sweeps a tawny cloud of dust ;
In foam they welter, and the pursuer's breath,
All mad for fame, for victory, or death. 140

First Erichthonius boldly did begin,
Drove horses four, and stood on wheels to win.
The Lapiths of Pelethron back'd the steed,
Invented bits, and lungeing at high speed,
And taught the knight caparison'd to prance, 145
Amassing stately steps in consonance.

Each work is hard, and each demands a horse
Impetuous, young, and eager for the course.

No veteran will serve ; though oft he hath
Routed the foemen from his battle-path, 150
And boasts his home Mycenæ, or Epire,
And proves his lineage from the sea-god sire.

Well heeding this, our men begin atime,
And spare no pains, with solid stuff to prime
The spouse elect, the bridegroom of the stud, 155
Nor stint him glaucous grass, and crystal flood ;
Good oats as well, amid his labour gay ;
That scrubby sons may not their scraggy sire pourtray.

The stud itself they stint, without mistake ;
And when spring-nuptials blithely re-awake, 160
No browsing shade for them, and fountains none,
But rattling gallops in the jading sun !
When groans the floor with heavily pounded corn,
And rising west winds toss the chaff forlorn.
All this they do, for fear the genial field 165

Have dull frequentage, through o'er pamper'd ease,
And clog the neutral furrows, that should seize
With heat, and keep the glowing germ conceal'd.

Now sires fall off, and care of dams succeeds,
When sped, with months complete, they rove the meads. 170
Let none permit them drag the yoke again
Of burden'd drays, or leap across the lane,
Or scour the meadows in impetuous mood,
Or breast the sweeping power of the flood.
But let them browse the quiet park at large, 175
And wander down a brimming runnel's marge,
Where moss abounds, and banks are velvet-green,
And grots, and rocky shadows overlean.

Around the groves of Silarus, and nigh
Alburnus clad with holm-wood, swarms a fly, 180
With Roman swains "asilus" is its name,
To Grecian shepherds "æstros" is the whame :
A scrannel, shrilly buzz, at whose first sign
Out of the forest dash the skeltering kine ;
The shaken welkin rages with their cry, 185
The forest, and the bank of Tanager gone dry.

'This monster 'twas that Juno launch'd, to wreak
Upon the Inachian heifer her foul pique.

And him thou shalt (for in the noonday glare
 He waxeth worse) from pregnant cattle scare ; 190
 And feed them, early in the fresh sunlight,
 Or when the stars conduct the steps of night.

When born, the calves at once engross our heed ;
 Forthwith we brand their special marks and breed ;
 The chosen few for stock and for increase, 195
 For altars which, and which to plough the leas,
 And turn with broken clods the tussock'd plain ;
 The rest unbranded crop the green champaign.

What steers thou wilt to industry constrain,
 And farming use—in early calthood train ; 200
 Impress the ways of discipline and right,
 While pliant souls and ductile age invite.
 Now gently first beneath their throats entwine
 Loose circlets made of slender willow-bine ; 204
 Then soon as free necks bow to servile plight,
 By these same wisps the harness'd pairs unite,
 And force the steers to time their steps aright. }

Now often let them draw unbodied* wheels,
 And scarcely mark the dust with flitting heels ;
 Soon must the beechen axle creak and strain, 210
 And pole of bronze drag well-compacted wain.

Meanwhile, for untrained youth thou shalt have mown,
 Not grass and dainty willow-leaves alone,
 And marshy sedge, but bladed corn ; and yet

Thou shalt not in our fathers' style, allow 215
 The snowy pail to drain the milching cow,
 But lavish all upon her new-born pet.

But if thy taste be cavalry and war, On wheels to skirt Alphæan waters far, Or lash through Jove's own wood the flying car ; The colt's first lesson is to meet and dare 221 The warrior's fury, steel, and clarion's blare,	} } }
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* Here I have ventured to depart from the great Virgilian scholar. "Rotæ inanes" seem to me to be contrasted with "juncti orbes;" the former being wheels unattached to any carriage. Also I believe that "vestigia" means not the wheel-rut (as Conington says) but the foot-prints, which are light from the light weight behind them.

To brook the groan the labouring wheel emits,
And bear in stall the champing of the bits ;
Then court the more his master's fond bravoh ! 225
And love the patted neck, and soft soho !

All this while yet a weanling, dare he must,
And eke his nose to lissome halter trust,
Though still a bantling, still with shivers rife,
And nursed in happy ignorance of life. 230

Three summers past, when now the fourth is nigh,
The rapid lunge he must begin to ply,
The ringing harmony of step to learn,
And arch the flexure of the knees altern ;
And be like one who laboureth, yet in play, 235
Challenge the winds to follow, if they may ;
And flying o'er the open, bridle-free,
Scarcely set foot upon the dusty lea.

As when, from Hyperboræan deserts vast,
Swoops the north wind, and sheds the Scythian blast, 240
And sheds the blight-clouds ; while the harvest deep,
And rippling meadows sway beneath his sweep ;

The forest tops return the mighty roar,
And ranks of billows roll upon the shore :
Lightly the wind flies over the land and main, 245
Skimming the corn-fields and the watery plain.

Such steed shall foam toward the Elëan goal,
Across the mighty space where chariots roll,
And toss the red froth from his lip, or prance
With lissome neck, in the battle-car of France. 250

At length, when trained, the goodly frame permit,
With fattening dredge* to grow as seemeth fit ;
For if you pamper thus or ere you train,
They lift their proud hearts, and when caught disdain
To bear the supple lash, or brook the lupine bit. 255

No zeal however can more strength confer,
Than to avert blind love's impassion'd spur,
Or beeves or be it horses thou prefer. }

* "Dredge," (which is a mixed crop of barley, oats, and vetches, &c., sown on purpose for horses,) seems to be the "farrago" of Virgil, Horace, and Varro.

And hence the bull to lonely meadows sent,
Behind a mountain lives in banishment, 260
Beyond wide rivers ; or must be confined
In pampering stalls, a prisoner from his kind.
For else the coy one's glance consumes his powers,
Nor leaves him time to think of woods and flowers ;
With winsome charms and often she suborns, 265
Her proud gallants to fight it out with horns.

In Sila's depth fair heifer feeds at large ;
Headlong her suitors hurry to the charge,
With give and take, and wounds pell mell, and gore
Shed black upon their bodies ; as they lock 270
With tug and groans, horns shiver in the shock,
While woods and long Olympus echo back their roar
No more the warriors share a common home,
But exiled far the vanquish'd bull must roam ;
In foreign parts he groans o'er his disgrace, 275
The conqueror's blows who reigneth in his place :
The love he lost for nothing, and the grief
To see the last of his ancestral fief.

For this he trains his muscle without stint,
And lies all night upon a bed* of flint, 280
He lives on hairy leaves, and reedy thorns,
Lunges, and learns to throw fire into his horns,
Jousting at trees, and girding at the blast
Rehearses battle, with the sand upcast :
Then rears his flag, with pristine power aglow, 285
And dashes headlong on the oblivious foe.

As when a wave rears white in the far deep,
And up the offing drags its volumed sweep,
Then rolling landward roars through rocky walls,
And, big as the mountain's self, towers and falls : 290
Deep waters boil out from the whirl below,
And dash the black sand up the undertow.

So then all kinds on earth of men and herds,
The ocean tribes, the beasts, the painted birds,

* I take "saxa" as following "instrato." A peculiarly elegant and forcible construction. "Inter," (the only obstacle) may be taken as semi-adverbial. This is quite in harmony with Virgil's style of "shunting"—so to speak—his outset.

Rush all alike to frenzy and to flame ; 295
Love rules them all, and love is still the same.
No other time the lioness so bold
Forsakes her cubs and wanders o'er the wold ;
No other time the lubbard bears have made
Such death and havoc through the forest shade ; 300
Then raves the boar, and then the tiger most ;
Bad travelling then on Libya's lonely coast.

See how the courser thrills from head to foot,
If once the scent hath brought the well-known gale !

Nor curb nor lash can check his hot pursuit, 305
Nor solid rocks, nor cavern'd crags avail,
Nor roaring floods athwart his track that hurl
Uprooted mountains in the billow-swirl.

Out runs, and whets his tusks, the Samnite boar,
And with his strong foot shoves the earth before, 310
Against a tree he rubs his ribs, and so
See-sawing proofs his shoulders for the blow.

And what of him, the stripling, in whose frame
Hard-hearted love arouses giant flame ?

Forsooth the waves by fitful tempests lash'd, 315
 In blind midnight, into them he hath dash'd ;
 Above him peals the portal of the heaven,
 And shout the surges on the boulders driven :
 " Come back !" in vain his wretched parents cry,
 And maiden sworn upon his death to die. 320

The spotted lynx of Bacchus, what do they ? The spiteful race of wolves, the mastiff—nay The timid stags, how eager for the fray !	})
--	----------------

Good sooth the filly's rage transcends the whole,
 And Venus' self hath given them her soul ; 325
 At such a time the Potniad yokemates four
 With reeking teeth the flesh of Glaucus tore.
 Through Gargara, and Ascanius, love is guide ;
 They scale the mountain, and they breast the tide.
 Soon as the subtle flame within them burns, 330
 In Spring the most (for then the warmth returns)
 With faces set to front the westward seas
 On cliffs they stand, and woo the flitting breeze ;

And oft with no espousals—wondrous tale !—

Away they fly impregnate of the gale ; 335

Through rocks, and crags, and bosom'd glens they run,

Not eastward, nor to meet the rising sun,

But northward, or where blackest south winds rise,

And with the chill of rain begloom the skies.

And hence Hippomanes (well-named by swains) 340

A clammy poison, trickles from their veins,

Hippomanes, sought out by step-dames vile,

Who mingle herbs of death, and glamour chant of guile.

But time is flying, flying, and for aye,

And we, love's prisoners, on his circuit stray. 345

Enough of herds—my second task ensues,

To drive the shaggy goats, and woolly ewes.

This labour, husbandmen, your skill displays ;

And hence by stout endurance hope for praise.

Myself know well how arduous to rehearse, 350

And dignify such niceties in verse :

But sweet love whirls me o'er Parnassic wold ;

I love the cliffs, unscarr'd by wheels of old,

Where slopes no track toward Castalian spring—
Come, honour'd Pales, now to shout and sing ! 355
Premising thus, I do proclaim that sheep,

 Until the leafy summer's slow return,
In comfortable stalls must have their keep,
 The ground well-strown with straw and truss of fern,
For fear chill ice should hurt thy fleecy care, 360
And spread the scab, and noisome footrot there.

 The goats I visit next, and here preside
To see the verdant arbutus supplied,
And runnels fresh, and stalls contrived to shun
The freezing winds, and face the winter sun, 365
The brow of day ; what time Aquarius drear,
On heaven's outskirts, bedews the dying year.

 To wit these goats no less attention earn,
Nor less will be the profit they return :
Despite the price Milesian wools acquire, 370
When styptic'd with the gorgeous blush of Tyre.

 For goats more oft their little ones produce,
And rich abundance of the milky juice :

The more the milk-pail foams from udders drain'd,
The more the glad streams flow when teats are strain'd. 375

Nor less the beards and grizzled chin they shave
Of goat that browses by Cinyphian wave,
Dishevelling bristles too, for use in camp,
Or camlets keep poor sailors from the damp.

Content they browse the woods and Arcad height, 380
Or bosky thorns that love an airy site :
Unbidden home they come, and lead their pets,
And scarce can climb the threshold with full teats.

Therefore the less they call upon thy care
Protect the more from ice and snowy air, 385
Bring cheery food, and twiggen fodder too,
Nor close the hay-racks all the winter through.

When zephyr calls, and June makes glad reply,
To glen and mead let goats and lambkins hie ;
Cull we the limpid freshness of the lawn, 390
Beneath the new-born star that brings the dawn,
While day is young, while grass is pearly grey,
And dew that tempts the flock on every spray.

Soon as the fourth hour draws the welkin's thirst,
And crone of querulous cicales thrills the hurst, 395
At wells or steep* pools bid the flock to drink
The water running in the holm-oak rink.

But in the hot noon, seek a bowering glade,
Where Jove's great oak, with hoary power amass'd,
Spreads giant arms; or where the grove, o'ercast 400
With sombre ilex, broods a holy shade.

Then give once more bright water, and once more
Lead out to browse, the setting sun before,
When limpid evening modulates the air,
And dewy moon the pastures doth repair; 405
When shores re-echo to the halcyon's cry,
And goldfinch warbles while the woods reply.

The swains of Libya why should I pursue,
The moors, the kraals with scarce a roof in view?

* "Alta" here must mean "steep-sided," for otherwise what need of rinks? As to that word, see note at p. 109.

All day, all night, and all the month accompt, 410
Their flock is grazing, and is marching prompt,
Adown the length of desert, without home,
The world is all before them where to roam.
The Afric herdsman takes his stock complete,
His house, and household gods, and weapons meet,
And Amyclæan dog, and shafts of Crete. }

The Roman thus, in patriot armour gay,
Beneath the tyrannous knapsack, crops his way;
Unwearied still, he plants the camp, and shows
A front that doth anticipate his foes. 420

How different Scythia, and Mæotic strand,
Where turbid Ister tosses yellow sand !
Where Rhodopé comes back to face the pole,—
For there they stall the flocks in close control.
No grass upon the plain, no leaves appear 425
On any tree ; but all the earth is drear,
With snowdrifts, and deep ice seven cubits high,
Eternal winter scowling in the sky,

Eternal north winds breathing frost ; and there
No sun that can the spectral shadows scare, 430
Whether he mount the steep of heaven, or lave
His chariot headlong in the crimson wave.

Upon the running river, unawares,
The crusts grow solid, and the water bears,
It's harden'd back the iron-bound wheel sustains, 435
The road of ships is now a road for wains :
Pots leap asunder, stiff the garments wax
When donn'd, and wine is served with slash of axe.
Whole dikes have turned to iceblocks, and cohered
Jagg'd icicle upon the unkempt beard. 440

Meanwhile the body of the air is snow ;
The sheep are choked ; the mighty bulk below
Of beeves stand overwhelm'd amid the drift ;
The huddled stags the numb weight cannot lift,
And scarce the top tines of their antlers show. 445

These, not with any toils, or slip of hound
Or scare of purple feather, they surround ;

But, while they breast the mountain-drift in vain,
The hunters close, and cleave their necks in twain ;
In spite of all their piteous roars, they slay 450
And shouting gladly carry home their prey.

The men themselves right snug, beneath the earth,
In delven pits keep holiday and mirth ;
Great stacks of oak and trunks of elm entire
They roll upon the hearth, and feed the fire : 455
With games they wile the night, and blithely pass
Ale and sour cider for the good wine-glass.

Beneath the sevenfold Hyperboreän wain
This race of men, contemptuous of rein,
Is lash'd by fierce Rhipæan blasts and cold, 460
And clad in tawny bristles from the fold.

If wool thy staple is, away with furze,
The thorny brake, the caltrops, and the burs !
Shun luscious grazing, and at once select
A snow-white flock with downy fleeces deck'd. 465
The ram (however white his body shows)
Who hath a black tongue under palate's gloze,

Cashier—(lest he embrown the fleece with stains)
And seek another in the bevièd plains.

With snowy guerdon thus (if we believe) 470
Did Pan, the God of Arcady, deceive
And tempt thee, Luna, to the greenwood shade ;
Nor couldst thou spurn the soft temptation laid.

But whoso loveth milk, himself must bear
Lote, cytissus, and salt herbs to the lair ; 475
For so they swell their udders from the stream,
And smack of saline memories in the cream.

Some wean their kids at once in separatude,
And tip their nozzles with the steel-barb'd hood.
Whate'er they milk at dayspring, and at prime, 480

At night they press ; whate'er, when sun goes down,
The shepherd takes at daybreak to the town,
Or with a dash of salt they shelf for winter-time.

Nor last, nor least, the dogs must have their place,
With fattening whey support that honest race ; 485
Swift Spartan whelps, Molossian mastiffs bold—
With these patrolling fear not for the fold,

Though nightly thieves and wolves would fain attack,
And fierce Iberians never spare thy back.

Nay, oft the wild-ass shalt thou harry so, 490
With hounds the hare, with hounds pursue the doe ;
Slot home the wild boar on his forest track,
And rouse him with the music of the pack ;
And, while the mountain echoes never cease,
Halloo unto thy net the hart of grease. 495

Learn too to light rank cedar in thy shed,
And scare with Galban fume chelyders dread.
For oft in some old rotten wattles' site
The deadly viper lurks and skulks the light,
Or adder haunting thatch and shadows deep, 500
(Pest to the cattle, spitfire to the sheep),
Lies earth'd—snatch stones up, snatch a cudgel, quick,
High as he rears, and puffs, and hisses thick,
Down with him ! now he bolts away in flight
And hides his craven head far out of sight ; 505
His middle joints, and the last bulge of his tail
Are scotch'd ; and tardy loops his final wriggles trail.

And worst of all there is that serpent vile
Who dwelleth in Calabria's dark defile,
Rolling his scaly back, his throat erect, 510
His belly lank with dingy blotches speck'd.
As long as rivers gush and earth is yet
With vernal dews and rainy breezes wet,
He haunts the marsh, and sheltering in the bogs
Gluts his black maw with fish and babbling frogs. 515
But when the mere is parch'd and scorch'd with drought
The crannied earth gapes open—he leaps out,
And rolling eyes of fire raves o'er the plain,
Tetter'd with thirst, and struck by heat insane ;
Then not for me soft slumber 'neath the sky, 520
Nor on a grassy orchard bank to lie ;
When, new from casting slough, and bright and young,
He rollicks ; and, forgetting eggs and brood,
Against the sunshine rears his towering hood,
And lambent darts his triply furrow'd tongue. 525
Moreover I will teach thee, an so please,
The origin and symptoms of disease ;

Foul scab attacks the sheep when chilling rains
Pierce to their quick, and white frost crisps the plains ;
Or when unwash'd at shearing-time the sweat
Sticks fast, and hairy briers their hides beset. 530

On this account the bearers of the crook
Plunge all their bleaters in the wholesome brook :
Splash goes the ram into the gurgling pool,
And drifts down stream, all waterlogg'd in wool. 535

Some strike with bitter lees the new-shorn flesh,
And mix litharge and native sulphur fresh,
Idæan pitch and unctuous wax they take,
Squill, hellebore, and black bitumen cake.

Yet in their trouble no more ready aid,
Or simple, is there than the good steel-blade ;
Whoe'er knows how must lift the ulcer's lid ;
The taint is fed, and lives, by being hid ;
While shepherds let the surgic hand grow numb,
And sit imploring better luck to come. 545

Nay, when the bleater's bones are all aflame,
And thirsty fever revels on his frame,

'Tis good to draw the kindled heat, and pierce
 Betwixt his toes the vein that spouts with blood :

Bisaltæ this, and this Geloni fierce 550

(Who rove the Thracian mountains) understood,
 Or who to Getic desert goes astray,
 And quaffs milk turn'd by horses' blood to whey.

If any sheep thou see'st of light afraid,	}	
Too gladly seek the luxury of shade,		555
Too idly nibble at the topmost blade,	}	

Come home the last, or grazing tumble prone,
 And drop off into dark night all alone—

At once with steel arrest the taint, before
 The mob fool-hardy catch the crawling sore. 560

Not faster swoops the squall upon the main,
 Nor blacker, than the murrains of the plain,
 Not one they seize but all the summering flock,
 The hope, the herd, the scions, and the stock.

This he who marks the towering Alps may read, 665
 Or Noric cairns, or Iapidian mead,

How even yet the shepherd's realm is waste,
And ancient sheepwalks far and wide untraced.

Here once of yore, by heaven's corruption raised,
A plague throughout the heats of autumn blazed, 570
All kinds of cattle and of beasts it slew,

Turn'd lakes to slime, and lawns to fetid gore,
Nor did an easy road to death ensue,

But when the fiery thirst, through every pore,
Had cramp'd and drawn the groaning joints, again 575
The flux of humours gush'd in every vein,
And suck'd and sapp'd the bones by slow degrees,
All carious, limp, and rotten with disease.

Oft, in the middle of the rites divine,
The victim, standing by the altar shrine, 580
While yet the fillet-band was being tied,
Fell down among the tardy priests, and died.
Or if sometime the sacrificial knife
Accomplish'd first the onset on his life,
No altars thence with fibrine gobbets burn, 585
No answer can the puzzled seer return :

The cut-throat blade is scarcely crimson'd o'er,
And scarce the dust embrown'd with starveling gore.

Hence calves among the jocund herbage die,
And lose sweet life where life has full supply : 590
Hence gentle dogs go mad, and coughs long drawn
Rack the poor swine, and choke the jaws of brawn.

Dull of his work, and listless of his feed,
Totters, and staggers, the victorious steed :
He loathes the fount, he paws with twitching blows, 595
With flagging ears, and sweat that comes and goes,
Fitful, a cold sweat of the doom'd ; the hide
Withers, and lumps against the hand when tried.

These signs, ere death, in early days they show ;
But when the murrain doth ferment and glow, 600
Then blazing eyes, and breath a long-drawn moan,
And sometimes labouring with a heavy groan ;
A gasping sob the knotted bowel draws,
The blood runs from the nostril in black flaws,
The raspy tongue grinds the blockaded jaws. }

'Twas good with wine the drenching horn to ply, 606
The latest glimpse of hope, before they die ;
Then this itself was ruin, and afresh

They blazed with fury, and in mortal throes
(God save the good, and punish thus his foes !) 610
With naked teeth they butcher'd their own flesh.

And smoking in plough-harness, lo, the bull
Falls prone, and vomits gore with frimmings full,
And fetches his last groan. The ploughman weist
Unyokes from brother's death the partner beast ; 615
A fellow-mourner on the homeward trudge,
And leaves in half-done job the plough no more to budge.

Deep forest shades and velvet lawns are nought
To wake their relish, or invite their thought ;
Nor brook that rolling through the rocks amain, 620
Than amber more pellucid, woos the plain.
Their flanks collapse, their eyes are glazed and dead,
And downward droops with slouching weight the head.

Ah what can good deserts avail them now,
Their honest toil, their kindly will at plough ? 625

What though no dainties of the wine-god's wealth ;
No feasts of state have undermined their health :
On leaf and lawn, a single course, they dine,
With limpid wells for glasses and for wine ;
Or rapid rivers brightening as they leap, 630
And no anxiety impairs their sleep.

That time it was (as local tales recite),
When kine were sought, in vain, for Juno's rite,
And cars were drawn unto her lofty shrine,
By ill-match'd buffaloes, in lieu of kine. 635

So men with harrows scratch the ground themselves,
And with their very nails dig in the grain ;

And labouring up the steepy mountain-shelves,
With craning neck, tug on the creaking wain.

No wolf explores the outposts of the sheep, 640
For ambuscade, or prowls around their sleep ;
Care hath him safe at home : while fawns and deer,
Through hounds and houses wander everywhere.

And now the offspring of the unmeasured sea,
And all the race of finny things that be, 645

Like shipwreck'd corpses, welter at high tide ;
 And seals in panic up the river glide.
 The viper in his nook is caught at last,
 And hyders die with standing scales aghast :
 The very birds do find the air a shroud, 650
 Headlong they drop, and leave their lives beneath a cloud.

Lost labour now to change the cattle's food,
 And choicest medicines do more harm than good :
 To save themselves away the doctors run, }
 Chiron the pride of Philyra for one, } 655
 Melampus also, Amythaon's son.

Now from the shadows of the Stygian vale
 To daylight leaps Tisiphoné the pale ;
 Her chariot-steeds are Pestilence and Dread,
 And higher each day she rears her ravening head : 660
 With bleat of sheep, and bellowings of kine,
 The streams and dry banks ring, and hills supine.

And now she slays by droves, and blocks the floor
 With slop of carcasses in slime of gore ;

Till men have learn'd to plunge the carrion raff 665
In graves and holes, for e'en their hides are draff.
No chance to scour the foul intestines pure
With water, or with blazing fire to cure ;
Nor e'en to shear the fleece, with scab and scum
Devour'd alive, or grasp the mouldering thrum ; 670
And whoso touch'd the loathsome garb at all,
Hot tetters and sour sweat along him crawl ;
His limbs do stink ; with little time for groans,
The holy fire consumeth joints and bones.





THE GEORGICS.

BOOK THE FOURTH.



PUR Sue I next, in sequel of design,
Aërial honey's benison divine ;
Mæcenas come, and watch, with him who sings
The admirable drama of small things ;

Chivalrous captains, every rank of life, 5

Their manners, tastes, communities, and strife,—

A tiny matter, but no tiny fame,

If Powers aloof, and Phœbus, hear my claim.

Seek first for bees a cot and station good,

Where neither wind hath entry of the bowers, 10

(For winds forbid them to bring home their food,)

Nor sheep and buttish kids dance o'er the flowers,

No vagrant heifer in her wanton raid
Scatters the dew, and wounds the rising blade.
Now bid avaunt from every thriving stack 15
The lizard, painted down his scaly back,
And birds,—the bee-devourer, and the rest,—
And Procne mark'd with red hands on the breast,
For wholesale death they spread, and swoop away
Poor flying bees, their savage nestlings' prey. 20

But crystal springs, and verdant pools of moss,
And slender rill, that steals its way across,
Let these be neighbours, while a palm-tree cool,
Or huge wild-olive shades the vestibule :
That when new kings lead early swarms away 25
To claim their Spring, and out of doors to play,
A bank may tempt them to refreshing eaves,
A tree afford them hostelry of leaves.

Toward the middle of the pool or stream
Cast boulder stones, and baulks of willow-beam ; 30
That bees may land on many a short pontoon,
And spread their pinions to the summer noon,

If haply Eurus sprinkle them astray,
Or plunge them headlong into Neptune's sway.

Around the whole let verdant casia grow, 35
And creeping thyme in sweet luxuriance blow,
And savory sigh its lush perfume away,
And violet-borders quaff the fountain's play.

Now as for hives, (or if you stitch them rough
From hollow'd cork, or weave with osier tough,) 40
Close entrance they must have ; for winter cold
Congeals, and summer melts the oozing gold.
From either foe alike must bees recoil ;
Nor futile is their rivalry of toil,
To daub with wax the crannies of their room, 45
And seal the orifice with pollen-bloom ;
And store for that same use a gluten rich,
Than bird-lime tougher, or Idæan pitch.

Nay, oft (if fame be true) beneath the loam,
In delven burrows, they have foster'd home ; 50
In hollow pumice their retreat we see,
Or in the cavern of a time-worn tree.

But nathless thou the leaky cots bestrew,
With plastering slime, and sprinkle twigs a few :
Nor leave the yew-tree to the hives too near, 55
Nor roast red crabs, nor trust the treacherous mere ;
Or where the reek of puddle hangs around, }
Or hollow crags at every stroke rebound, }
And baffled backward leaps the ghost of sound. }

Thereafter, when the golden sun come home, 60
Hath routed caitiff winter out of sight,
And swung the bars of heaven with summer light—

At once the woodland and the glen they roam ;
They reap inside the purple flowret's brim,
And sip the ripple of the brook they skim ; 65
And hence, with some mysterious comfort blest,
They cuddle close their progeny and nest,
Hence deftly forge their glossy wax anew,
And mould the honey as it clings thereto.

Now when the swarm just sallied forth you spy, 70
Through summer's crystal swimming up the sky,

And while you marvel at the dusky cloud
Drawn down the wind, mark whither goes the crowd :
To limpid brooks and leafy roofs they tend ;
There sprinkle thou the cordials I commend ; 75
Balm-gentle bruised, and honeywort's low hame,*
And, wake a dong, and clang the cymbals of the dame :
Themselves will stoop to spicy homes, and dive
(From habit) deep into the cradle hive.

But if they march to battle (for with two 80
Corrival kings, tumultuous discords brew)
At once 'tis easy to forecast afar
The public mood, the hearts that pant to war :
The martial blare of metal chides the slack,
And voice that rings like jerking clarion's crack : 85
All of a bustle, hip and thigh, they close,
Flash wings, whet stings and square their arms to fence,
And round their king, and own head-quarters, dense,
Pell-mell they trumpet challenge to the foes.

* Is it lawful in a rustic poem, to venture now and then upon a rustic term? The haulm (or stalk) is pronounced "hame" in agricultural districts. I have used like liberty elsewhere, but only at long intervals.

At length a fine May-day and fields at large, 90
Out of the gates they burst, and then the charge !
A shock to heaven : they swirl in a great ball,
They hug, they fight, and headlong down they fall :
No thicker pours the hailstorm, nor so fast
From shaken holm-tree pelts the shower of mast. 95
The kings, in thick of fight, outwing the rest,
A giant spirit in a pigmy breast ;
So staunch, so dogged not to flinch, or ere
The crushing victor routs them here and there.

These outbursts of the soul, this awful riot— 100
Toss up a pinch of dust, and all is quiet !

But when thou hast recall'd the captains twain,
The one of baser aspect must be slain,
For fear he lavish and impair the state :
So let the nobler reign without a mate. 105
The one will flash with spots of golden sheen,
(For sorts are twain), distinguish'd is his mien,
Bright red his scales : behold the nobler bee !
The other manged with sloth drags paunch ingloriously.

As kings have twain, so too plebeian race 110
Twain aspect hath ; for some are rough and base,
As when a traveller comes from depth of dust,
And sputters from his dry mouth earthy crust.

The others flash with glinter of gold sparks,
Their bodies pearl'd with corresponding marks : 115
Choice stock are these ; and thence, in heaven's good time,
Sweet honey shalt thou rack away, and prime,
Nor sweet alone, but flowing crystal fine,
And sure to tame the crudity of wine.

When swarms at random gambol in the air, 120
Despise their comb, and leave their houses bare,
Restrain wild spirits from these gambols vain :
Nor is it mighty labour to restrain :
Clip thou the monarch's pinions, while they lag,
None dare the heavenly route, or hoist the marching flag. 125

Let gardens breathing saffron bloom invite,
And Hellespontic Godhead, arm'd aright,
Priapus, sentinel of thief and thrush,
Stand guard with scythe made of a willow-bush.

The lover of the bee himself must deign' 130

To plant around them mountain-pine and thyme,
Himself with earnest work his hands begrime,
Set flowering shrubs and pour the friendly rain.

Now, (an I were not in a wearied sort,
Just furling sail, and running into port), 135

Rich gardens might I still attempt to sing,
And all the troubles whence the beauties spring ;

The beds where twice the Pæstan roses blow,

The endive's joy to drink the runnel's flow,

Banks green with parsley, and waylost in grass 140

What lordly paunch our cucumbers amass .

Nor would I scorn—so be I had my will—

The winter love-locks of the daffodil,

The lithe acanthine arch, the ivy pale,

And myrtle, lover of the sea-side vale. 145

How well I mind me, near Æbalia's hold,
(Where black Galæsus lips the harvest gold,)

That old Corycian gentleman I knew,

Who own'd a strip of waste, some acres few,

Unmeet for ploughing and for grazing kine, 150

Nor even courteous to the god of wine !

Yet dibbing through the brushwood here and there,

A patch of coleworts, girt with lilies fair,

And vervain, and daint* poppies, he outwent

A royal fortune in his heart's content. 155

At dusk of night his cottage home he sought,

And piled the table with a feast unbought.

In spring, the first to pluck a rose new-blown,

In autumn, first to shake the pippins down ;

And when glum winter split the rocks with cold, 160

And curb'd the rivers in its icy hold,

E'en then soft curls of hyacinth† he drest,

With fie for late spring, and for laggard west !

* As to the terribly vexed word "*vescus*," it seems to me from the context, both here and at iii. 175, as well as from the epithet "*cereale*" applied to the poppy, i. 212, that it means in our author "*edulis*." Akin, as it seems, both to "*esca*," and "*vescor*," this would be its first meaning. Could it come to signify "*macer*" or "*tenuis*," by a simple transition from "*edulis*" to "*peresus*?"

† Professor Conington prefers the reading "*hyacinthi*." In deference to him I adopt it, though "*acanthi*" seems to have warranty from

No wonder then, if first of all was he
 To lead the swarm and tend the matron bee ; 165
 And first the bubbling honeycomb to press,
 For limes had he, and pine-trees numberless :
 And every fruit the tree at flowering wore,
 The same in autumn fully † ripe it bore.

'Twas he in metre rank'd, and taught to grow 170
 Ungainly elms, stiff pears, and thorny sloe,
 Now red with damsons ; and the plane he made
 To quaffing friends, a minister of shade.

verse 123. The learned Professor's objection that "*acanthus*" is "*semper frondens*" disappears before his admission that "*coma*" means flower, rather than leafage.

† Here Conington's note appears to me one of his least valuable ; except perhaps when he makes the good wife, in the dead of winter, take a *vine-leaf* to skim her pot ! "*Matura*," surely belongs to "*poma*," and not to "*arbos*." What he meant about "*in flore novo*," is hard to discover. All lovers of Virgil must admire, thank, and deeply regret him ; but now and then such keen-edged accuracy, when applied to poetry, passes into hair-splitting.

All this however, barr'd by space unjust,
 I leave, for other lips to sing, when I am dust.* 175
 Come, prithee now, the special gifts of bees,
 By Jove's own charter added, I will tell ;
 When, led by loud Curetan melodies,
 And tinkling cymbals, to Dictæan cell,
 The monarch of the heavens they nourish'd well. 180

* I have wandered a little, it must be confessed, in the above locus suavissimus. May I, for the sake of comparison, offer a version of the well-known passage in the Odyssey? In neither can I content myself ; though doing, in both, my utmost.

“ Outside the yard, and nigh the double-door,
 A goodly orchard stretcheth acres four :
 Around it doth a girding stockage drive ;
 And here tall trees have nurture and do thrive :
 Pears, and pomegranates, apples streak'd with light,
 And luscious figs, and olives thriving bright :
 Whose fruit is never cast, and never fails,
 Through drought of summer, or through winter gales :
 But evermore, the softly breathing west,
 Is setting some, and mellowing the rest.
 So pear on pear attains a russet age,
 And pippin follows pippin, stage by stage ;

Hence only they their sons in common own,
And common tenancy of peopled town,

On cluster'd grapes new-clustering grapes encroach,
And fig is hustled by young fig's approach.

And here, well-rooted, teems his vintage-plot ;
One part a sun-floor, on a level spot,
Well-caked by sunshine: other part hereby
They harvest home, the rest they turn to dry.
Beyond them are the callow bunches seen,
Shedding the bloom-dust from the grapelets green ;
The rest, with marbling violet hang between. }

Along the verge trim herbaries appear,
Of divers kinds, a heyday all the year.
Amid the whole, two springs of water burst ;
The one throughout the garden is dispers'd ;
The other hies beneath the courtyard sill,
Towards a tall house where the burghers fill ;
Such bounteous gifts hath Heaven shed everywhere,
On good Alcinoüs, and his mansion fair."

Od. vii.

I fear (both as a lover of gardening, and a dabbler in poetry), there
can be little doubt but that the old master is the truer one.

And live beneath the majesty of law :
Hence only they remember, as they roam,
The joys of fatherland and stedfast home ; 185

And watching winter's rapid step with awe,
In summer days to prentice labour turn,
And lay in public storehouse all they earn.

For some keep eye to provender, and speed
(With time-code fixed) the duties of the mead : 190

And some, within their party walls, distil
Tough glue from bark, and tears of daffodil,
The first foundation of the comb ; whereto
They hang their wax, as clammy as the glue.
Some lead abroad, emboldening by degrees, 195
The nation's hope, the full-grown heirs of bees.
Some pack the honey'd purity, and swell
With limpid nectar every bulging cell.

And some, by lot, the warder's post supply,
To watch in turn the shower and cloud go by ; 200
Or take the loads their fellow workmen bring,
Or charge, and scatter from the sacred ring

The drones, a lazy pack : while, in its prime,
The hot work glows, and honey redolent of thyme.

As when Cyclopes, at stern need of heaven, 205
From ductile masses forge the red-hot levin ;
Some make the bull's-hide bellows give and take,
Some dip the hissing metal in the lake :
Mount Ætna groans beneath the anvil's weight ;
The giants, down the smithy, mate and mate, 210
With mighty effort their great arms they swing,
Ding dong—and turn the iron to the pincer's ring.

So, if the bold resemblance be not vain,
Cecropian bees a genius have for gain ;
Each in his sort : the gaffers guard the town, 215
Entrench the comb, and carve the Dædal coign ;
The youngsters deep in evening dusk rejoin,
Weary, and booted with the wild thyme down :
Arbuté they sip, gray willows, casia too,
Red crocus, limes, and hyacinths steel-blue. 220

All rest together, all together work :
At dawn they rush from gates, and none may shirk,

Until the evening star hath bid them speed,
With all the forage of the rifled mead :
Then home they hie, and take good care of self, 225
With hums, and murmurs, round the door and shelf ;
Till, snug in bed, they lull them for the night,
And hearty slumber wraps each weary wight.

But never from the homestead will they stray
Too far afield before a rainy day ; 230
Nor trust the sky that lowers with eastern squalls,
But safe abide beneath their city walls ;
There quaff the wave, and venture little trips ;
And poise themselves with pebbles ; as the ships,
Crank ships, take ballast when the seas are loud ; 235
With these they poise them through the gauzy cloud.

How strange their habit, you will say, in this,
That never do they tempt connubial bliss :
Love's gentle enervation they disdain ;
Nor learn a mother's pleasure after pain. 240
From balmy plants, and leafage of the trees,
They cull, with their own lips, the children bees :

A king, and little Romans soon they own,
And reinstal the court, and waxen throne.

Nay, oft, in roving o'er a raspy stone, 245
They chafe their wings, and for their load have died ;
So true their passion for the flowers alone,
So honey is their grand parental pride.

Hence, though themselves a narrow term comprise
(For never more than seventh their summer flies,) 250
Yet everlasting doth their race remain, }
Through many ages stands dynastic reign ; }
And grandsires' grandsires swell the noble train. }

Than Ægypt, Lydia, or Hydaspes more,
Or Parthian tribes, their monarch they adore : 255
The monarch safe—all hearts and minds are one ;
The monarch lost—society is gone :
Themselves asunder rend the honey-dome,
And burst the wattled order of the comb.
The king protects their work, the king they greet 260
With hums of awe, and body-guard complete ;

Upon their backs they lift him, and confront
A death of glory, in the battle-brunt.

By signs like these and these ensamples led,
The sage affirms that bees (a favour'd line) 265
Participate intelligence divine,

And draughts ethereal from the fountain-head.
For God pervadeth all, above, around,
The earth, the ocean, and the heaven profound.
From Him the flocks, the herds, mankind, and brutes, 270
Each one at birth his subtle life recruits ;
To Him, again, doth all creation yearn,
And solved into its elements return ;
No room for death—all quick with life they fly
Unto the roll of stars and heritage of sky. 275

Now, when the narrow homestead you unseal,
And honey locker'd for the public weal,
First with a draught of water dash your face,
And launch a column of thick smoke in chace.
Twice every year they pack the pregnant comb, 280
And twice a year complete the harvest home ;

When first Taygeté, the Pleiad, gleams
With forehead fair, and spurns the ocean streams ;
Or when the Fishes' watery star to flee,
She sadly sinks into the winter sea. 285

When plunder'd thus, their passion knows no bound ;
In every sting they breathe their venom fierce,
Leave barbs deep buried in the veins they pierce,
And fling their life and soul into the wound.

But though you fear hard winter, and love thrift, 290
And pity spirits crush'd in fortune's rift,
Yet who would doubt to fumigate the stacks
With thyme, and pare away the empty wax ?
For oft a lizard gnaws the comb unseen ;
Or maggots choke the cells and skulk between ; 295
Loose drone lolls o'er a feast by proxy earn'd ;
Or hornet swaggers in, quite unconcern'd ;
Or moth-grubs dire ; or good Minerva's hate,
The spider, hangs her loose web o'er the gate.

And yet the more despoil'd and robb'd they be, 300
The more will all with heart and will agree

To prop the ruin'd family once more,
 To fill the cells, and weave the flowery store.

But if their bodies flag with sore disease,
 (For life entails our troubles e'en on bees,) 305

Which soon by signs unerring thou shalt trace ;
 The sick change colour, in a moment's space,
 And haggard gauntness warps the lines of face : }

Then forth they bear the bodies reft of light,
 And sadly solemnise the funeral rite ; 310

Or, clasp'd together by the feet they cling,
 Along the threshold, hanging in a string ;
 Or skulk within their barricaded hold,
 Benumb'd with famine, stark with cramp and cold.

Then deeper hums are heard, and drawling tone ; 315

As cold south-winds adown the forest moan ;
 As chafed seas hiss in the backrush of the waves ;
 As quick fire up the batten'd furnace raves.

Hereon I counsel smoke of Galban weed,
 And honey, introduced through pipes of reed ; 320

Yourself encouraging each languid guest,
And tempting towards the dish he loves the best :

Therewith a smack of pounded gall will suit,
Dried rose, or wine-lees boil'd until they clot ;

Nor let the Psythian raisin be forgot, 325
Cecropian thyme, and Centaur's reeking root.

A flower there is, in meadows oft espied,
Yclept " Amellus," round the countryside,
A plant right easy to be found, sithence
From one small tuft it rears a forest dense ; 330

The disk of gold ; the countless petal rays
Of deepest violet, shot with purple haze :
With twisted wreaths hereof the shrines are hung :
But acrid is the flavour on the tongue :

The shepherd plucks it, down the browsen dell, 335
And nigh the winding waters of the Mell.

This root stew thou, in spicy wine ; and pour
The soup in brimming platters nigh the door.

But if a man lose all his stock at once,
And hath no means to colonise again ; 340

'Tis time for me with frankness to announce
The grand discoveries of the Arcad swain ;
And how from slaughter'd steers, not rare to see,
The gore when tainted hath produced the bee.
This legend more at length I will unroll, 345
Retracing from its origin the whole.

For where the folk, by fortune loved so well,
Of Macedonian Canopus dwell,
Upon the verge of Nilus' flooded tide,
And round their farms in painted shallops ride ; 350
Where quiver'd Araby curtails the scene,
And, fattening with black ooze the Ægyptian green,
Abruptly forks, to seven wide mouths bespread,
A torrent e'en from colour'd Indians sped—
Their certain welfare all these regions fling 355
Upon the hazard of the art I sing.

A little nook, for special purpose strait,
Is chosen first, and coped with shieling slate,
With side-walls narrow, and four windows scant,
To face the four winds with the light aslant. 360

A steer next chosen, who begins to bow
The budding horns upon a two-year brow ;
Whose nostrils twain and breath of mouth—despite
His struggling jerks—are reeved with stitches tight :
Then cudgell'd carefully, he doth expire, 365
With bowels pounded, but his hide entire :
There in the pen they leave him, on a bed
Of twigs, and thyme, and casia newly shed.

All this is done when first the zephyrs blow,
And bid once more impulsive waters flow ; 370
Ere blushing meads their new apparel weave,
Or twittering swallows nestle in the eave.

Meanwhile the humours in the mangled steer
Ferment ; and wondrous forms of life appear :

Squat footless trunks at first ; then, humming shrill, 375

They huddle with their wings ; then more and more
Make snatches at the sleezy air—until

Forth, like a storm from summer clouds, they pour ;
Or arrows, hurtling from the cord afar,
When Parthians hover on the skirts of war. 380

What god, ye Muses, forged so grand an art ?
Or whence did man's unfledged experience start ?

The shepherd Aristæus, having fail	}	385
Of bees, by pest and want, (so runs the tale,)		
Was flying from Peneïan Tempe's vale ;		
He sadly stood, the sacred fount anigh,		
And call'd his mother with a grievous cry.		

“ Cyrene, mother, mother who dost dwell
Down at the bottom of this whirl-pool'd well,
Oh why, of race illustrious and divine, 390
(If Thymbra's god be truly father mine,)
Why didst thou bear me to fate's malison ?
And where is all thy grand affection gone ?

Why bid me hope for heaven and laugh at death ?

Lo, e'en this precious boon of mortal breath—

395

Which scarce for me rare vigilance and thrift

Of corn and cattle eked, with every shift—

I fling with such a mother's love adrift !

Now come, thyself, my fruiting orchards lop,

Toss firebrands on my fold, and kill my crop,

400

Burn all I sow'd, ply axe upon my vine,

Since thus thou art disgusted with all praise of mine."

Beneath the chamber of deep waters faint

The mother heard the voice of that complaint ;

Around her nymphs were culling fleeces fine,

405

Milesian, steep'd with mordent hyaline ;

Here Drymo, Xantho, and Ligæa were,

With white necks flashing through the waves of hair ;

Phyllodocé, Nesæa, Spio shy,

Thalia and Cymodocé were nigh ;

410

Cydippe, bright Lycorias, (one a maid,

One newly blest with good Lucina's aid,)

Clio and Beroë, daughters of the main,
 Bezoned with gold and painted fells the twain;
 Opis, and Ephyré, and from Asian ooze, }
 Dëiopé, and agile Arethuse, }
 Content at last her arrows to disuse. }

415

Among them Clymené in music told
 The vain anxieties of Vulcan old,
 The tricks of Mars, the stolen sweets he won,
 And brisk loves of the gods, since time begun.

420

While thus enchanted by her song they drop
 Their downy labours from the spindle-top,
 Again the swain's cry struck his mother's ear,
 From glassy thrones they all start up in fear;
 But foremost Arethuse sprang up, and gave
 A glimpse of golden hair above the wave;
 Then cried afar, " Oh not in vain thy throe,
 Cyrene sister, at such wail of woe!
 Himself for thee, thy chiefest care, thy child,
 Poor Aristæus stands, with sorrow wild,

425

430

On father Peneus' brink he weeps his shame,
And calls thee cruel by a mother's name."

"Bring, bring him here to us," his mother cries, }
Suddenly pierced with terrible surprise, } 435
"The gates of gods are free, when he applies." }

At once she bade the depths to stand aside,
The youth to plant his footsteps on the tide ;
Around him arch'd the mountain wave, and led
Down the profound gulf, to the river bed. 440

Now through his mother's palace of the waves,
Through limpid realms and lakes enlock'd in caves,
And softly babbling groves, he walk'd amazed,
Beneath the mighty march of waters dazed ;
Here, all the rivers of the world he found, 445
In separate channels gliding underground ;
Here Phasis flow'd, and Lycus, and the source
Whence deep Enipeus bursts upon his course,
Whence father Tiberine, and Anio pour,
And Hypanis awakes his rocky roar ; 450

Cäicus too, the Mysian stream ; and he
 With twain gilt horns on taurine brow indued,
 Eridanus, than whom no wilder flood
 Through fat lands rolleth into purple sea.

Now when they reach'd the bower of stalactite, 455
 And good Cyrene learn'd his weeping plight,
 The sisters duly give the lustral spring,
 And napkins soft of shaven fleece they bring ;
 Some pile the boards with flagons and with meats,
 And fire the altars with Panchaian sweets. 460

“ Now take a stoup of Lydian wine,” quoth she,
 “ And quaff to old Oceanus with me.”
 Therewith herself makes prayer to Ocean, sire
 Of all the world, and nymphs the sister choir,
 The nymphs, whereof a hundred guard the woods, 465
 A hundred watch the majesty of floods :
 With liquid nectar thrice the hearth she sprack,
 Thrice leap'd the flame to roof-tree, and shone back ;
 Cheer'd by the omen, thus she up and spake :

“ There dwells in Neptune’s deep Carpathian bight, 470
A famous seer, the ‘ azure Proteus ’ hight ;
O’er the broad main with chariot-fish who speeds,
And joint caparison of biped steeds.
Again he visits now Emathian port,
And old Pallené, his ancestral court. 475
We nymphs do homage to this reverend sage,
And Nereus waives the birthright of his age :
Because the seer all knowledge hath combined,
What is, what was, and what still looms behind :
So Neptune will’d, whose herds of monstrous breeds, 480
And foul sea-calves, below the surge, he feeds.

“ ’Tis he, my son, must first be chain’d and penn’d,
To tell your ailment, and to bless the end :
For no advice without duress he spares,
Nor shalt thou bend him by a world of prayers : 485
Sheer force and chains (when caught) upon him fix,
Such force alone can shatter bootless tricks.

“ Myself, when sun hath lit the blaze of noon,
When plants are thirsting in the glare of heat,
And cattle find the shade a grateful boon,
Myself will show the old man’s dark retreat,
Whereto he hies him wearied from the deep ;
That fairly thou may’st catch him fast asleep.

490

“ But when thou hast him, clutch’d and shackled tight,
Strange forms and faces wild will mock thy sight ;
Rough hog, black tigress, scaly dragon, he
Will in a glance, or tawny lion be ;
Or crackle into flame and slip thy chain ;
Or trickling into oozing waters wane.
The faster he to every shape shall fly,
The faster thou, lad, strain the iron tie,
Till, after all his shifts, thou recognise
The form he wore when first he closed his eyes.”

500

She spake, and shed ambrosia’s liquid scent,
Wherewith her son’s whole body was besprent ;
Sweet air adown his sleecken tresses blew,
And comely vigour knit his limbs anew.

505

There is a lonely cavern, deep and wide,
Beneath the scooping of a mountain's side,
Whereto the waves, by distant winds uphove, 510
Come lapping into a secluded cove ;
A haven safe from every tempest shock ;
And there lies Proteus in a shield of rock.
The nymph ensconced the youth in ambuscade,
Herself retiring into mist and shade. 515

Hot Sirius swept the thirsty Indians dry,
And sun-fire drank the middle of the sky ;
The grass was burnt, the shrunk jaws of the stream
Were baked to clay, beneath the blasting beam,
When Proteus, now retiring from the wave, 520
Made for the shelter of his favourite cave.
Around him ocean's brood, a wallowing crew,
Flung rampant, far and wide, the briny dew :
Then o'er the beach these monsters of the deep
Stretch their loose frames, and straggle off to sleep. 525

Himself—like shepherd of a mountain flock,
 When Hesper leadeth home the pastured kine,
 And bleating lambkins whet the wolf to dine—
 Himself amid them sits, and counts them from a rock.

Of whom when Aristæus won the chance, 530
 Scarce waiting for the old man's slumber trance,
 With mighty shout he rush'd upon his prey,
 And clapp'd the handcuffs on him where he lay.

He, not forgetful of his glamour gift, }
 Betakes himself to miracles of shift, } 535
 A fire, a monster, and a river swift. }

But when no falsehood could invent escape,
 Foil'd he came back, and spoke in human shape.

"Outrageous fellow! who bade thee appear
 In my house thus? and what thy business here?" 540

"Sure, Proteus, now you know," the youth replies;
 "For who can cheat you? Pray, have done with lies:
 I come, by order of the gods express,
 To crave an oracle for my distress."

No more he said : the prophet in dismay, 545
Roll'd eyes ablaze with lustre green and grey ;
Then, grinding heavily his jaws awry,
Unseal'd his lips, for words of fate to fly.

“ The retribution on thee is divine ;
Thou art in penance for a sign condign. 550
Poor Orpheus, innocently wrong'd by thee,
Invokes this judgment, and the Fates' decree.
For still he raves, and mourns his stolen bride,
Who fled thee headlong by the riverside ;
Poor girl, she saw not, till too late to pass, 555
The monstrous hyder in the tussock grass.
Then Dryad sisters fill'd the mount with shrieks,
Wept Rhodopé, and wept Pangæan peaks,
Mavortian land of Rhesus, Getæ high,
And Hebrus, and the Actian Orithye. 560

“ The minstrel to his hollow shell would mourn,
For consolation, under love forlorn ;
' Sweet wife,' he sang, on lonely shores away,
' Sweet wife,' at dayrise, and departing day !

“ Nay e’en the jaws Tænarian, hell’s arcade, 555
And grove in sombre majesty of shade,
He pierced ; and met the King of terrors there,
And hearts that cannot melt at human prayer.

“ By noble music out of black night led,
Came shadows wan, and spectres of the dead, 570
As flocking birds the forest cloisters fill,
When dusk, or winter storm, lowers o’er the hill.
There lords and dames advanced in solemn train,
And stately heroes, quit of life’s campaign,
With lads, and girls, to loss of wedlock doom’d, 575
And youths before their parents’ eyes entomb’d.
Black ooze around them, and gaunt sedges grow,
Cocytus, sullen lake with waters slow,
And Styx ninefold encompasseth their woe. }

“ Nay, deepest home and inmost shrine of Death, 580
And Furies coif’d with vipers blue, held breath ;
Grim Cerberus kept agrin his triple jaws ;
And wind allow’d Ixion’s wheel to pause.

“ Returning now, the minstrel’s way was won ;
 Behind him follow’d, to the breeze and sun, 585
 Eurydice, restored but still unseen,
 (By strict condition of the infernal Queen,)
 When sudden madness seized the lover wild—
 A sin to smile at, if hell ever smiled.
 He stopp’d ; and at Eurydice his own, 590
 Upon the brink of daylight faintly shown, }
 Too fond, alas ! look’d back, and all was gone ! }
 Broken the bond of the ruthless tyrant fell ;
 And thrice rang thunder through the gulfs of hell.

“ ‘ Ah, what,’ she cried, ‘ what madness wretched me 595
 Hath thus destroy’d, and, oh, my Orpheus, thee ?
 Lo, back they call me unto cruel doom,
 And slumber doth my swimming eyes entomb.
 And now Farewell ! The great night rushes o’er !
 Weak hands to thee I spread, thine own, ah never more.’

“ With that, she vanish’d from his eyes away, 601
 As smoke becomes a ghost where breezes play.

“ In vain he grasp’d at every flitting shade,
And yearn’d to say a thousand things unsaid :
She saw him never more. The boatman grave 605
Forbade all further passage of the wave.

“ What now to do ? And whither now to wend ?
His wife twice lost, what hope to find a friend ?
All moans, all music, were but waste of breath :
She, in the spectral boat, lay stark again with death. 610

“ For seven whole months, in dreary course complete,
He wept, they say, at a cloud-capp’d mountain’s feet ;
And where sad Strymon’s lonely waters rove,
Unto the cold stars * read his tale of love :
Enchanting tigers, as he pass’d along, 615
And leading oak-trees by the power of song.

“ So in a poplar grove, the nightingale
The loss of all her little ones doth wail,
When cruel ploughman, having mark’d the spray,
Hath dragg’d their callow innocence away : 620

* “ Astris,” a well-supported reading, seems to me far more poetical than “ antris.”

All night she weeps in mournful music's flow, }
 And sitting on a branch, renews it moe, }
 And fills the world with melody and woe. }

“ His heart, no love, no wedlock, touch'd again :

Alone, the ice of Hyperboreän plain, 625

Alone the snowdrifts of the Don he cross'd,

And wolds unwidow'd of Rhipæan frost.

Eurydice was still the moan he made,

And Pluto's mercy, by himself bewray'd.

“ Till Cicon dames, by true love so repulsed, 630

With rites of gods, and midnight wine, convulsed,

In madden'd orgy rent the hapless bard,

And strew'd him, limb by limb, along the sward.

E'en then, while deep Æagrian Hebrus whirl'd

The floating head from neck of marble hurl'd, 635

‘ Eurydice,’ the voice and tongue of death, }

‘ Ah, poor Eurydice !’ the parting breath ; }

‘ Eurydice !’ the echo of the water saith.” }

Thus Proteus spake, and plunged into the deep ;

And cleft the foaming surge beneath his leap. 640

Not so Cyrene ; but in cheerful vein
Advancing, thus address'd the trembling swain ;

“ My son, thou may'st that heavy heart forego ;
For here lies all the reason of thy woe—

The Nymphs, with whom she danced beneath the trees, 645
Have sent this wretched pest upon thy bees.

Now sue their peace with gifts, as may behove,
And bow before sweet sisters of the grove :

When once entreated, soon they smile and spare—
But first I will expound the mode of prayer. 650

“ Four noble bulls, of passing size and mien,
Who browse thine headlands of Lycæus green,
And heifers maiden-neck'd as many more,
Choose thou, and near a shrine build altars four ;

Then ope the holy fountain with thy blade, 655
And leave their bodies in the greenwood shade.

But when the ninth morn shows the birth of light,
Lethæan poppies waft to Orpheus' sprite ;

Eurydice with slaughter'd calf appease,
Slay a black sheep, and seek the greenwood trees.” 660

No time he lost her counsels to pursue,
The shrine he seeks, he wakes the altars due,
Four noble bulls of passing size and frame
He leads, and heifers maiden-neck'd the same.
And when the ninth morn led the birth of light,
He seeks the wood, and wafts to Orpheus' sprite.

665

But here a sudden portent they behold,
A prodigy right wondrous to be told—
Throughout the molten paunch of every steer,
Throughout the bowels, booming bees appear!
Among the broken ribs they hum and play,
And stream in endless wisps of cloud away;
Upon a tree top now they swarm, and now
Hang their long tassels from a bending bough.

670

* * * * *

[All this of tillage, cattle, and greenwood,
I sang, while Cæsar to Euphrates' flood
Is thundering war; and conquering, hath given
Glad people laws, and shapes his path to heaven.

675

Me, Virgil, then Parthenope could please
With sweet pursuits of unambitious ease ;
At shepherds' songs in sanguine youth who play'd,
And thee, good Tityrus, in the beechen shade.]

680

THE END.



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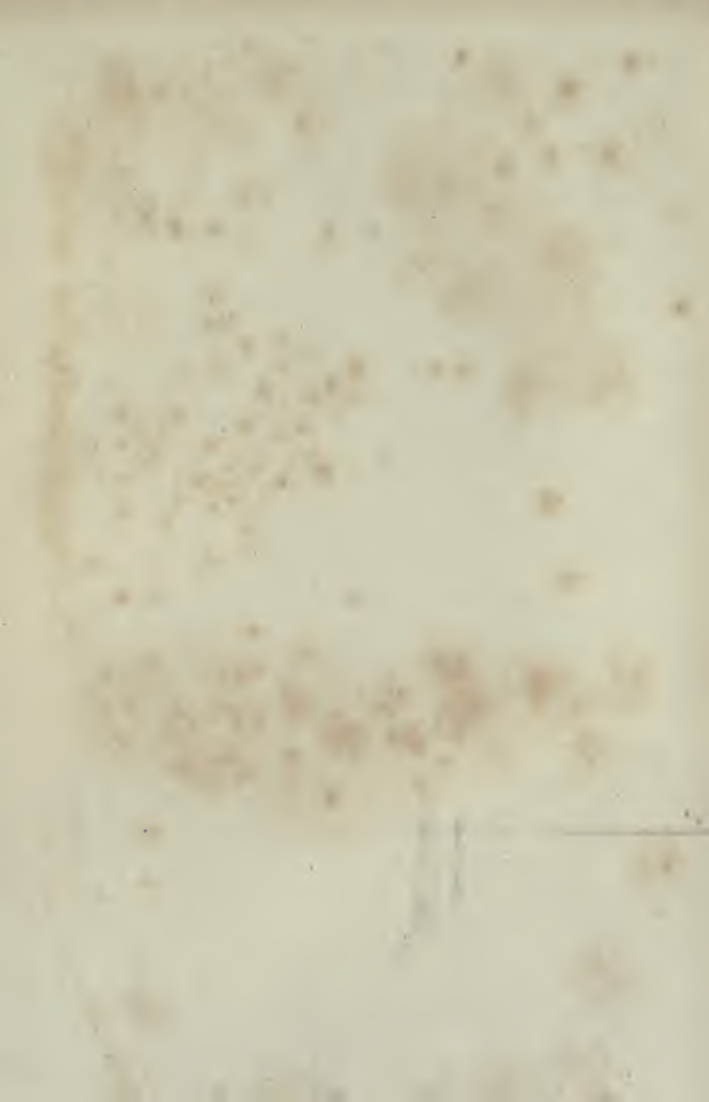
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